



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Ret. from Howe's Bookshop Ltd. Hastings



280 e. 3856





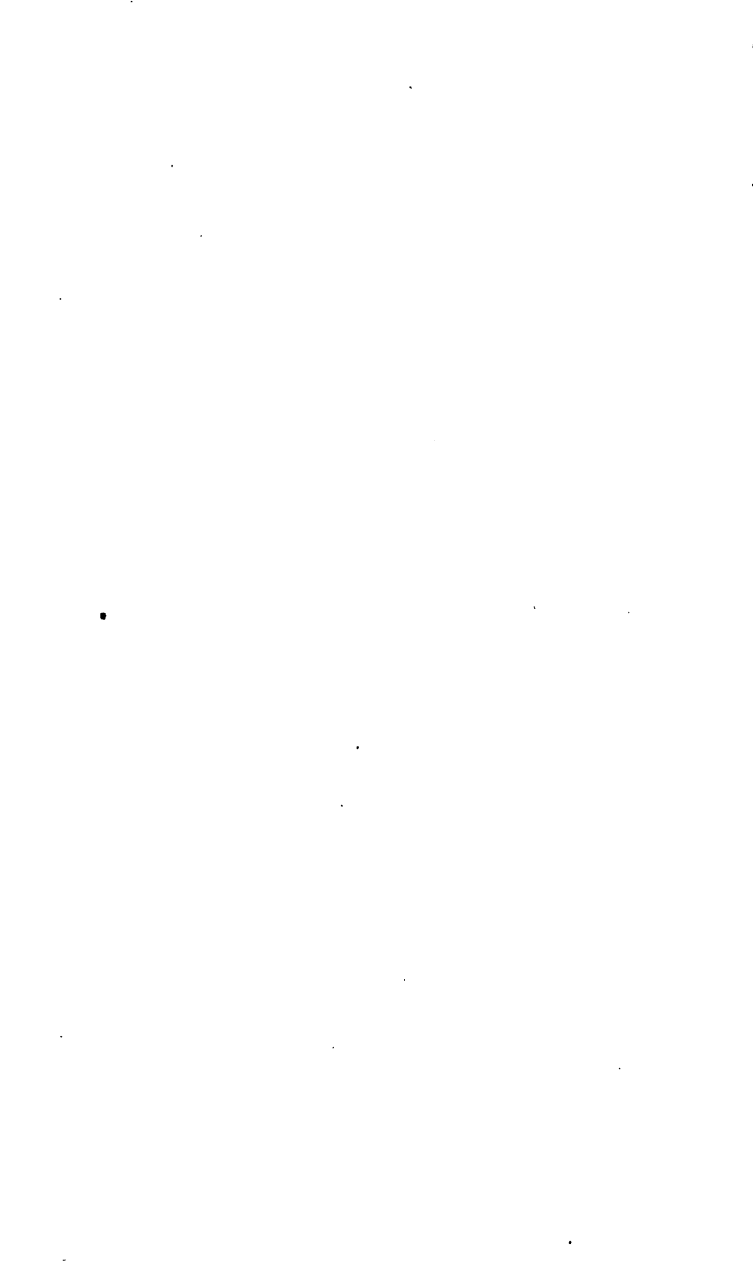
1st Collected Sch

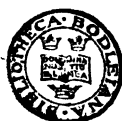
1/2 3/2 1/2

12/21

116

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.







A. Foulton, sc.

Percy B. Shelley

FROM AN ORIGINAL PICTURE IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS SHELLEY

London, Edward Moxon, Dover Street

THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

EDITED

BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Lui non trov' io, ma suoi santi vestigi
Tutti rivolti alla superna strada
Veggio, lunge da' laghi averni e stigi.—Petrarca.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXXXIX.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN,
WHITEFRIARS.



TO
PERCY FLORENCE SHELLEY,

The Poetical Works

OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS FATHER

ARE DEDICATED,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE MOTHER,

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

LONDON, 20TH JANUARY,
1839.



PREFACE.

BY THE EDITOR.

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprung, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life ; except, inasmuch as the passions which they engendered, inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth ; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others ; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark, that

the errors of action, committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed, by those who loved him, in the firm conviction, that were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary. Whatever faults he had, ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they proved him to be human ; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley, were, first, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection, and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement. To defecate life of its misery and its evil, was the ruling passion of his soul : he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind ; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt

for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects, cannot understand this ; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partizans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution ; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth ; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal ; the resolution firm to martyrdom ; the impetuous pursuit ; the glad triumph in good ; the determination not to

despair. Such were the features that marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.

In addition to these, his poems may be divided into two classes,—the purely imaginative, and those which sprung from the emotions of his heart. Among the former may be classed “The Witch of Atlas,” “Adonais,” and his latest composition, left imperfect, “The Triumph of Life.” In the first of these particularly, he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all, there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life—a clinging to the subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward form—a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.

The second class is, of course, the more popular, as appealing at once to emotions common to us all; some of these rest on the passion of love; others on grief and despondency; others on the sentiments inspired by natural objects. Shelley’s conception of love was exalted, absorbing, allied to all that is purest and noblest in our nature, and warmed by earnest pas-

sion ; such it appears when he gave it a voice in verse. Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealised ; and many of his more beautiful effusions he had cast aside, unfinished, and they were never seen by me till after I had lost him. Others, as for instance, "Rosalind and Helen," and "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," I found among his papers by chance ; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them. There are others, such as the "Ode to the Sky Lark," and "The Cloud," which, in the opinion of many critics, bear a purer poetical stamp than any other of his productions. They were written as his mind prompted, listening to the carolling of the bird, aloft in the azure sky of Italy ; or marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames.

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits ; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet,

and the galling sense of our own mistakes and errors, fraught with pain ; to escape from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and felt happy when he sheltered himself from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealise reality ; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passing whims exalted into passions, for this gratifies our vanity ; but few of us understand or sympathise with the endeavour to ally the love of abstract beauty, and adoration of abstract good, the τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν of the Socratic philosophers, with our sympathies with our kind. In this Shelley resembled Plato ; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal, than in the special and tangible. This did not result from imitation ; for it was not till Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study ; he then translated his Symposium and his Ion ; and the English language boasts of no more brilliant composition, than Plato's Praise of Love, translated by Shelley. To return to his own poetry. The luxury of imagination, which sought nothing beyond

itself, as a child burthens itself with spring flowers, thinking of no use beyond the enjoyment of gathering them, often showed itself in his verses: they will be only appreciated by minds who have resemblance to his own ; and the mystic subtlety of many of his thoughts will meet the same fate. The metaphysical strain that characterises much of what he has written, was, indeed, the portion of his works to which, apart from those whose scope was to awaken mankind to aspirations for what he considered the true and good, he was himself particularly attached. There is much, however, that speaks to the many. When he would consent to dismiss these huntings after the obscure, which, entwined with his nature as they were, he did with difficulty, no poet ever expressed in sweeter, more heart-reaching, or more passionate verse, the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul.

A wise friend once wrote to Shelley, " You are still very young, and in certain essential respects you do not yet sufficiently perceive that you are so." It is seldom that the young know what youth is till they have got beyond its period ; and time was not

given him to attain this knowledge. It must be remembered that there is the stamp of such inexperience on all he wrote ; he had not completed his nine and twentieth year when he died. The calm of middle life did not add the seal of the virtues which adorn maturity to those generated by the vehement spirit of youth. Through life also he was a martyr to ill health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations. Perfectly gentle and forbearing in manner, he suffered a good deal of internal irritability, or rather excitement, and his fortitude to bear was almost always on the stretch ; and thus, during a short life, had gone through more experience of sensation, than many whose existence is protracted. "If I die to-morrow," he said, on the eve of his unanticipated death, "I have lived to be older than my father." The weight of thought and feeling burdened him heavily ; you read his sufferings in his attenuated frame, while you perceived the mastery he held over them in his animated countenance and brilliant eyes.

He died, and the world shewed no outward sign ; but his influence over mankind, though slow in growth, is fast augmenting, and in the ameliorations that have taken place in the political state of his country, we may trace in part the operation of his arduous struggles. His spirit gathers peace in its new state from the sense that, though late, his exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

He died, and his place among those who knew him intimately, has never been filled up. He walked beside them like a spirit of good to comfort and benefit—to enlighten the darkness of life with irradiations of genius, to cheer it with his sympathy and love. Any one, once attached to Shelley, must feel all other affections, however true and fond, as wasted on barren soil in comparison. It is our best consolation to know that such a pure-minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him ;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him.

In the notes appended to the poems, I have endeavoured to narrate the origin and history of each. The loss of nearly all letters and papers which refer to his early life, renders the execution more imperfect than it would otherwise have been. I have, however, the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements, as far as they go. In other respects, I am, indeed, incompetent ; but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve ; and hope in this publication to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley's genius, his sufferings, and his virtues :

S'al seguir son tarda,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Consacrerò con questa stanca penna.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
QUEEN MAB	1
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	96
ALASTOR ; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE	107
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	139
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM	143
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	375



QUEEN MAB.

/ VOL. I.

B



QUEEN MAB.

I.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon,
With lips of lurid blue ;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave,
It blushes o'er the world :
Yet both so passing wonderful !

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul ?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins

Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish ?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin ?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize ?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness ?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from her smile ?

Yes ! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence
That might have soothed a tiger's rage,
Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillowed :
Her golden tresses shade

The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark ! whence that rushing sound ?

'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening :

'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh ;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep :

Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window, but the tints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen !
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air ;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light :

These the Queen of Spells drew in,
She spread a charm around the spot,
And leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
Long did she gaze, and silently,
Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh ! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand,
 Astonishes, enraptures, elevates—
 When fancy at a glance combines
 The wond'rous and the beautiful,—
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
 Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which reined the coursers of the air,
And poured the magic of her gaze
 Upon the sleeping maid.

The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry ;
The pearly and pellucid car
 Moved not the moonlight's line :
 'Twas not an earthly pageant ;
Those who had look'd upon the sight,
 Passing all human glory,
 Saw not the yellow moon,
 Saw not the mortal scene,
 Heard not the night-wind's rush,
 Heard not an earthly sound,
 Saw but the fairy pageant,
 Heard but the heavenly strains
 That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight ; yon fibrous cloud,
 That catches but the palest tinge of even,
 And which the straining eye can hardly seize
 When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
 Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair star
 That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
 Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
 As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
 Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
 Yet with an undulating motion,
 Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
 The Fairy Queen descended,
 And thrice she waved her wand
 Circled with wreaths of amaranth :
 Her thin and misty form
 Moved with the moving air,
 And the clear silver tones,
 As thus she spoke, were such
 As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY.

Stars ! your balmiest influence shed !
 Elements ! your wrath suspend !
 Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
 That circle thy domain !
 Let not a breath be seen to stir

Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air !
Soul of Ianthe ! thou,
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon
That waits the good and the sincere ; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
The icy chains of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age ;—Soul of Ianthe !
Awake ! arise !

Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul ; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
Each stain of earthliness
Had passed away, it reassumed
Its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay,
Wrapt in the depth of slumber :
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions ; 'twas a sight

Of wonder to behold the body and soul.

The self-same lineaments, the same

Marks of identity were there ;

Yet, oh how different ! One aspires to Heaven,

Pants for its sempiternal heritage,

And ever-changing, ever-rising still,

Wantons in endless being.

The other, for a time the unwilling sport

Of circumstance and passion, struggles on ;

Fleets through its sad duration rapidly ;

Then like a useless and worn-out machine,

Rots, perishes and passes.

FAIRY.

Spirit ! who hast dived so deep ;

Spirit ! who hast soar'd so high ;

Thou the fearless, thou the mild,

Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,

Ascend the car with me.

SPIRIT.

Do I dream ? Is this new feeling

But a visioned ghost of slumber ?

If indeed I am a soul,

A free, a disembodied soul,

Speak again to me.

FAIRY.

I am the Fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep.
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather: not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace, which in the end, all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.
She knew her glorious change,

And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round :
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded ;
The silver clouds departed ;
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
Shaking the beamy reins,
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peep'd the first faint smile of morn :—
The magic car moved on—
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,

The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.

The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.

Seemed it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal,
The coursers seemed to gather speed ;
The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth
Appear'd a vast and shadowy sphere ;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave ;
Its rays of rapid light

Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven ;
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder : some
Were horned like the crescent moon ;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea ;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven ;
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here !
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the slightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze

Is less instinct with thee :
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature ! thou !
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple !

II.

IF solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere :
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Crowned with a diamond wreath.
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea ;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,
Nor the feathery curtains
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnished ocean-waves,
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that fairy Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea ;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Look'd o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Enter'd the Hall of Spells :
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not :
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody

Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
And, for the varied bliss that press'd around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.

Spirit ! the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
This is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur ;
But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come !
This is thine high reward :—the past shall rise ;
Thou shalt behold the present ; I will teach
The secrets of the future.

The Fairy and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement.—
Below lay stretched the universe !
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,

Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony ;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance :
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb ;
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.

But matter, space and time,
In those aerial mansions cease to act ;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye
Its kindred beings recognized.
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.

How wonderful ! that even
 The passions, prejudices, interests,
 That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
 That moves the finest nerve,
 And in one human brain
 Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
 In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried,
 Palmyra's ruin'd palaces !—
 Behold ! where grandeur frowned ;
 Behold ! where pleasure smiled ;
 What now remains ?—the memory
 Of senselessness and shame—
 What is immortal there ?
 Nothing—it stands to tell
 A melancholy tale, to give
 An awful warning : soon
 Oblivion will steal silently
 The remnant of its fame.
 Monarchs and conquerors there
 Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
 The earthquakes of the human race,—
 Like them, forgotten when the ruin
 That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile
 The Pyramids have risen.

Nile shall pursue his changeless way ;
Those Pyramids shall fall ;
Yea ! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood ;
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name !

Behold yon sterile spot ;
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert-blast.
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.
Oh ! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane ; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God ;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished ; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh ! they were fiends :

But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now :
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
Now crumbling to oblivion ;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which, in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh ! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there !
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
Then, shuddering meets his own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowed and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses, and deceives.

Spirit ! ten thousand years
Have scarcely past away,
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and aping Europe's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent :
There, now, the mossy column-stone,
Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appeared to brave
All, save its country's ruin ;
There the wide forest scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
Chance in that desert has delayed,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
Strangers, and ships, and merchandize :
Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain :
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity :
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

There 's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man ;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud
But flowed in human veins :
And from the burning plains
Where Lybian monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride !
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world ;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel and live like man ;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state ;

And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived ; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view ;
Yet dim from their infinitude.

The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle ;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

III.

FAIRY ! the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her ethereal eyes,

I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive
Experience from his folly :

For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven.

MAB.

Turn thee, surpassing Spirit !
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou knowest how great is man,
Thou knowest his imbecility :
Yet learn thou what he is ;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless Time prepares
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid
Yon populous city, rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around : the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy ; hearest thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend ? He passes on :
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury ; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels, which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine : when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled

From every clime, could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety,—if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,
Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom ; then that king
Is happy ; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now
Stretched on the gorgeous couch ; his fevered brain
Reels dizzily awhile : but ah ! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen ! he speaks ! oh ! mark that frenzied eye—
Oh ! mark that deadly visage.

KING.

No cessation !

Oh ! must this last for ever ! Awful death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee !—Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep ! O dear and blessed peace !
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons ! wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude : yet shunn'st
The palace I have built thee ! Sacred peace !

Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

Vain man ! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark ! yet he mutters ;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err : earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure ;
And all-sufficing nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe ?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him ? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity ?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ ? No—'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives

Just as his father did ; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a *king* and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not nature, nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being ; not one wretch,
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
Is earth's un pitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne !

Those gilded flies

That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption !—what are they ?
—The drones of the community ; they feed
On the mechanic's labour : the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests ; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death,
To glut their grandeur ; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose ?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring

Their daily bread ?—From vice, black loathsome vice,
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong ;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness ; from lust,
Revenge, and murder.—And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
The nations ; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery ; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony ;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood ;—kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle ; its authority
Will silently pass by ; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay ; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize ? Oh ! the faintest sound
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble. Aye ! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes !
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died

In ages past ; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,

Who, great in his humility, as kings
Are little in their grandeur ; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit ;—when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more :
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve ;
Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
But to appal the guilty. Yes ! the grave
Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost
Withered that arm : but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb ;
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble ; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man ;
The subject, not the citizen : for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,

Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches ; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonising death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new-created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound ;
Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness ? and, when Rome,
With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm, red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions ?

Look on yonder earth :
The golden harvests spring ; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life ; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession ; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—

All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace ; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart ; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone ? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,
Than on the dome of kings ? Is mother earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil ;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate ?

Spirit of Nature ! no !
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou, aye, erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable :
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice,
As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature ! thou
Life of interminable multitudes ;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through Heaven's deep
silence lie ;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam ;—
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth :
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely come ;
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV.

How beautiful this night ! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love has spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow ;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam ; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace ;—all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness ;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling : not the faintest breath

Steals o'er the unruffled deep ; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day ;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes :
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters ; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully ;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey ;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah ! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven ?—that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon ? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round !
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale midnight on her starry throne !
Now swells the intermingling din ; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb ;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage :—loud, and more loud
The discord grows ; till pale death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquer'd draws

His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there
In proud and vigorous health ; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sun-set there ;
How few survive, how few are beating now !
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause ;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapt round its struggling powers.

The grey morn

Dawns on the mournful scene ; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors : far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,

Surpassing Spirit !—wert thou human else ?

I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features : yet fear not ;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch,
set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall ;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust

With spirit, thought, and love ; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery ; his soul
Blasted with withering curses ; placed afar
The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps ?

Nature !—no !

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower,
Even in its tender bud ; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth ; whilst specious names
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah ! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps

From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world !
How withered all the buds of natural good !
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power ! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent, whence it sprung,
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life : yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being : all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness ;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage !

Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remained.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds ; these beget
Evil and good : hence truth and falsehood spring ;
Hence will, and thought, and action, all the germs

Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, form'd for deeds
Of high resolve ; on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be ;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes

That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secure the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravoës who defend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear :
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuge of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile : their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villanous, with rage
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
Alone might kindle ; they are decked in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some Eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude : he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood !
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still ;
And, right or wrong, will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

* * * * * * *
 * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills, destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness : the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

They rise, they fall ; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms : yet behold !
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart ;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince !
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy master was :—or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale

Against thy short-lived fame : or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self !
Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth ? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness ?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
When will the morning come ? Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism ?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease ?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible ? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love ?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold'st in their protraction ? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy confined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die ?

V.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world ; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scatter'd on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there, though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deform'd,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of religion, selfishness !
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all

The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name :
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance : at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny ;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile ;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame ;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield ;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring ;
But poverty and wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,

Which poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind,

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold ;
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers ; from his cabinet,
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery ;—
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,

Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth !

The harmony and happiness of man
Yield to the wealth of nations ; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul ;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth ! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol, Fame,
From Virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,

With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,
To deeds of charitable intercourse
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry ; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care ;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil ;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself ;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny ; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs, he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,

And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will :
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care !
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail !
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town !

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ :
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,

Which death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eyebeam), might alone subdue.
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal : gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will ;
Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold : the very light of heaven
Is venal ; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,

All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold ; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce ; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience ; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith :
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed :
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,

When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of the patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still !

There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change ;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime ;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from power's avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death ;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase ; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,

No balancings of prudence, cold and long ;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give :—
Madly they frustrate still their own designs ;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave :
A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works ;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted changing glows ;
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke :
It is a wild and miserable world !
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy ! in the lapse of years,
Is there no hope in store ?
Will yon vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them ?
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this withered limb of Heaven ?

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
Oh ! rest thee tranquil ; chase those fearful doubts,
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes ! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust ;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time :
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of éver-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.

How sweet a scene will earth become !
Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres ;
When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit, on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs ; deadly power

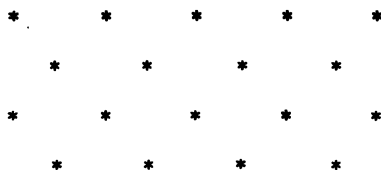
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth !

Madness and misery are there !

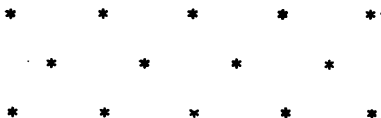
The happiest is most wretched, ! Yet confide

Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy

Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.



VII.



VIII.

THE present and the past thou hast beheld :
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn

The secrets of the future.—Time !

Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny !

Joy to the Spirit came.

Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear :

Earth was no longer hell ;

Love, freedom, health, had given

Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,

And all its pulses beat

Symphonious to the planetary spheres :

Then dulcet music swelled

Concordant with the life-strings of the soul ;

It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death.—

Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea,
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits :

Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

Joy to the Spirit came,—
Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death ;
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen :
I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore ;
The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given

The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure ; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit ! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And, midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A light-house o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves,
And melodize with man's blest nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,

Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
 Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
 And where the startled wilderness beheld
 A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
 A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs
 The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
 While shouts and howlings through the desert rang ;
 Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
 Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
 To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Sharing his morning's meal
 With the green and golden basilisk
 That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
 Has seen above the illimitable plain,
 Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
 Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
 Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
 Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
 So long have mingled with the gusty wind
 In melancholy loneliness, and swept
 The desert of those ocean solitudes,
 But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
 The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm ;
 Now to the sweet and many mingling sounds
 Of kindest human impulses respond.
 Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
 With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,

And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life :
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness :
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad :
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glowes in the fruits, and mantles on the stream :
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees ;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood :
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid ; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane

Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows :
All bitterness is past ; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all ;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each ;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth ;
He chief perceives the change ; his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night ;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own :

His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached ;
His death a pang which famine, cold, and toil,
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought :
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law.

Nor, where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest, and disease,
Was man a nobler being ; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust ;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which, all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade ;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe ;
Or he was led to legal butchery,

To turn to worms beneath that burning sun
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire ; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime :
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind ;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless store of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene

Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth : no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man ; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror : man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals : happiness
And science dawn, though late, upon the earth ;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame ;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there ;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extends
Its all-subduing energies, and wields
The sceptre of a vast dominion there ;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.

O HAPPY Earth ! reality of Heaven !
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire ;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope !
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will !
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there :
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place !
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance, dare not come :
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven !

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams ;
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss,
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action ; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear ;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them
there.

Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep pressed to dust :
Time was the king of earth : all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love ;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they rolled away :
First, crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong ;
Whilst falsehood, tricked in virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till, done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked ;

Reason was free ; and wild though passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet, like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober, kiss'd the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death :
The tranquil Spirit failed beneath its grasp.
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blest with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age !
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow !
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth !
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest
 grace ;
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will, that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.
Those delicate and timid impulses
In nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life ;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure, together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan, and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo ; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower,
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung :
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal !
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone,
That mingled slowly with their native earth :
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness :
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind :
Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses :
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done :
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past : the present now recurs.
Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit ! bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change :
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense

Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend ;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe ;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies,
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit ! fearlessly bear on :
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand ;
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns ;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue : earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed ?
Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,

When to the moonlight walk, by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death ?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore ?
Never : but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings, as a friend's disease :
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good ; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish
thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received : virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one ! and give that bosom joy

Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew :
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below :
The chariot paused a moment there ;
The Spirit then descended :
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then ;
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame :

Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed ;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained :
She looked around in wonder, and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

NOTES.

P. 12, l. 24.

*The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.*

BEYOND our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8' 7" in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles.—Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

P. 45, l. 1.

*Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb.*

"One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither shall they return again."—*Ecclesiastes*, chap. i.

P. 45, l. 4.

*Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.*

Οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει· ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη.
ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεή, ἣ μὲν φύει, ἣ δ' ἀπολήγει.
ΙΛΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

P. 47, l. 8.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem :
Non, quia vexari quemquam 'st jocunda voluptas,
Sed, quibus ipse malis careas, quia cernere suave 'st.
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli,
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri :
Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere,
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena ;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ ;
Certare ingenio ; contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
O miserâs hominum menteis ! O pectora cæca !
Lucret. lib. ii.

P. 48, l. 18.

*And statesmen boast
Of wealth !*

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer ; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessities of his neighbour ; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterise the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The noble-

man who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until "*jam pauca aratro jugera, regis moles relinquent*," flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for their continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates, the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comforts of civilisation without which civilised man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide-extended and radical mistakes of civilised man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness*: the jeweller, the toyman, the actor, gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertion, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability; so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *ceteris paribus*, be preferred; but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries, of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable conditions of

* See Rousseau, "De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes," note 7.

their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man; hence it follows, that, to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour, is wantonly to deprive them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement: and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief, the disease, lassitude, and ennui, by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors: wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort. 

The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours, which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlargement of our stock of knowledge, the refinement of our taste, and thus open to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

* * * * *

It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But, surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism.—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay II. See also Pol. Jus. book viii. chap. 11.*

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilised life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

P. 56, l. 23.

*To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.*

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilised man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers*. . Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production†. The researches of M. Bailly‡ establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary 49° north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany, and France, were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches

* Laplace, *Système du Monde*.

† Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*, vol. ii. page 406.

‡ *Lettres sur les Sciences, à Voltaire.—Bailly*.

us also, that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished. 

P. 65, l. 20.

*Him (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which, from the exhaustless store of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, &c.*

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of a hundred ideas during one minute by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours, another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half-an-hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalise amid the lethargy of every-day business;—the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!

Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink,
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought,
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,

My life more actual living will contain
 Than some grey veterans' of the world's cold school,
 Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
 By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

*See Godwin's Pol. Just. vol. 1. page 411; and Condorcet,
 Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de
 l'Esprit Humain, époque ix.*

P. 66, l. 1.

*No longer now
 He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.*

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken however by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience.

—————Immediately a place
 Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisome, dark,
 A lazarus-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
 Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm or racking torture, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
 Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
 And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
 Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
 Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this
 frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says, that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:
Post ignem ætheria domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this! Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence.—Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an abstract from Mr. Newton's *Defence of Vegetable Regimen*, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

“Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this:—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (*primus bovem occidit Prometheus* *) and of fire,

* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. sect. 57.

with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet, (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation,) ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave.”*

•

But just disease to luxury succeeds;
And every death its own avenger breeds,
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage—man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event, that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow-animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question:—How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits, and reject the evils, of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true, that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connexion of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty, necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhala-

* Return to Nature. Cadell, 1811.

tions of chemical processes ; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel ; the absurd treatment of infants ;—all these, and innumerable other causes, contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing ; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation, that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion ; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood ; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instinct of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say, Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists*. In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption, and have ample and cellulated colons. The cæcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals ; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame then is that of one fitted

* Cuvier, *Leçons d'Anat. Comp.* tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees's *Cyclopædia*, article "Man."

to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true, that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome ; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals ; until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences ; *for a time* I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change, from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring ; but, to decide on the fitness of animal food from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces, is to make the criminal a judge of his own cause ; it is even worse ; it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system ? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow-denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured ; not the water we drink, (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions*,) for the animals drink it too ; not the earth we tread upon ; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean ; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest ; but something then wherein we differ from them ; our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct

* The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the diseases which arise from its adulteration in civilised countries, are sufficiently apparent.—See Dr. Lambe's Reports on Cancer. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.

which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime, is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors! who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings! How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have received a general sanction from the sottishness and the intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fé*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his

eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unrelenting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannise would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilised life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious pabulum, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer*.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted

* Lambe's Reports on Cancer.

victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded that, when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear, that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death, as that one is not nine, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful, life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that, in April, 1814, a statement will be given, that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma, now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those, who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay*.

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliment demonstrably pernicious should not become universal.—In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and, when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth.

* Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen. Cadell, 1811.

The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of alimient absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater license of the privilege by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation, that should take the lead in this great reform, would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified, that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries, of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalry, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered, that it is a foe to everything of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realise a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organised for the liberty, security, and comfort, of the many. None must be intrusted with

power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter* than is usually supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose, that, by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much however be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilised man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that, from the moment of relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption,

* It has come under the author's experience, that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's poem, "Broad, or the Poor," is an account of an industrious labourer, who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter* asserts, that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar to the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of ennui, that unconquerable weariness of life more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realises the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character ; to the divinity of one of simple habits no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand

* See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.

concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man, whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman, would find some difficulty in sympathising with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not to the young enthusiast only, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings, capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies, should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man, whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual health and natural playfulness*. The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases that it is dangerous to palliate, and impossible to cure, by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal, foe?

Ἄλλὰ δράκοντας ἀγρίους καλεῖτε καὶ παρδάεις καὶ λέοντας,
αὐτοὶ δὲ μαφονεῖτε εἰς ὀμότητα καταλιπόντες ἐκείνοις οὐδέν.
ἐκείνοις μὲν ὁ φόβος τροφή, ἡμῖν δὲ ὄψον ἐστίν.

* * * * *

Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον

* See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating; the judicious treatment which they experience in other points may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7500 die of various diseases; and how many more of those that survive are rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal! The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land.—*Sir G. Mackenzie's History of Iceland*. See also *Emile*, chap. i. pages 53, 54, 56.

μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων δηλοῦται τῆς κατασκευῆς. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγίᾳ γεγονότων, οὐ χραπύτης χείλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης ὀνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονία καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάσασθαι δυνατὴ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες ; ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἡ φύσις τῇ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῇ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῇ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος, ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. Εἰ δὲ λέγεις πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ ταιαύτην ἔδωδον, ὃ βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτον αὐτὸς ἀπόκτεινον. Ἄλλ' αὐτὸς διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρησάμενος κοπίδι, μηδὲ τυμπάνῳ, μηδὲ πελέκει· ἀλλὰ ὡς λύκοι καὶ ἄρκτοι καὶ λέοντες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φονεύουσιν, ἔνελε δῆγματι βοῦν, ἢ σώματα οὖν, ἢ ἕρνα ἢ λαγῶν διὰβρῆξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσὼν ἔτι ζῶντος ὡς ἐκεῖνα.

* * * * *

Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστε ὕψον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν, εἰτα ὕψον πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κρέας δεόμεθα, ἀναμιγνύντες ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὕξος, ἢ δύσμασι Συριακοῖς. Ἀρραβικοῖς, ὥσπερ ὕντως νεκρὸν, ἐνταφιάζοντες. Καὶ γὰρ οὕτως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τινὰ κρεусаπεύντων ἔργον ἐστὶ τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι καὶ διακρατηθείσης δὲ δεινὰς βαρύτητος ἐμποιεῖ καὶ νοσῶδεις ἀπεψίας.

Οὕτω τὸ πρῶτον ἡγριὸν τι ζῶν ἐβρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον εἰτα ὕρνις τις ἢ ἰχθὺς εἰλκυστο· καὶ γευόμενον, οὕτω καὶ προμελετήσαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικοῦν ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἦλθε, καὶ τὸ κόσμον πρόβατον καὶ τὸν οἰκουροῦν ἀλεκτρυόνα· καὶ καταμικρὸν οὕτω τὴν ἀπληστίαν τυνάσαντες, ἐπισφαγὰς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φόνους καὶ παλέμους προῆλθον.

Πλούτ. περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας.

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB.

BY THE EDITOR.

SHELLEY was eighteen when "Queen Mab" was written : he never published it. When he wrote it, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a "judge of controversies ;" and he was desirous of acquiring "that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism." But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions ; and in printing and privately distributing "Queen Mab" he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. The poem has since been frequently reprinted ; and it is too well known, and the poetry is too beautiful, to allow of its being omitted, although it is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that escape the ordinary reader, and the change his opinions underwent in many points, would have prevented him

from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. To a certain extent, the same motives influence me. Were the poem still in manuscript, even less might be given ;—as it is, such portions are omitted as support, in intemperate language, opinions to which at that age he was passionately attached.

A series of articles was published in the "New Monthly Magazine" during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent, a fellow collegian and warm friend of Shelley : they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge ; endowed with the keenest sensibility, and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere, too delicately organised for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth ; and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and justice not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved, he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys : this roused, instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience, when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in so-

cieties, where one egged on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion ; while the attachment he felt for individuals and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature, and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions, and excuse evil actions.

The oppression which, trembling at every nerve yet resolute to heroism, it was his ill fortune to encounter at school and at college, led him to dissent in all things from those whose arguments were blows, whose faith appeared to engender blame and execration. "During my existence," he wrote to a friend in 1812, "I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read." His readings were not always well chosen, among them were the works of the French philosophers ; as far as metaphysical argument went, he temporarily became a convert. At the same time, it was the cardinal article of his faith, that if men were but taught and induced to treat their fellows with love, charity, and equal rights, this earth would realise Paradise. He looked upon religion as it is professed, and, above all, practised, as hostile, instead of friendly, to the cultivation of those virtues, which would make men brothers.

Can this be wondered at! At the age of seventeen, fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardour to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy,—he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal.

The cause was, that he was sincere ; that he believed the opinions which he entertained to be true ; and he loved truth with a martyr's love : he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of seventeen. It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilised nations of modern times, that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows, and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash ; nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me no other human being as participating, in more than a very slight degree : this was his *unworldliness*. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or

future advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise of those who were hostile to him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. The world's brightest gauds, and its most solid advantages, were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions, which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed, not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he met, the more earnestly he became attached to his peculiar views, and hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. He was of too uncompromising a disposition to join any party. He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement : nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood, which he thought the proper state of mankind, as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. Ill health made him believe that his race would soon be run ; that a year or two was all he had of life. He desired that these years should be useful and illustrious. He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. In this spirit he composed **QUEEN MAB.**

He was a lover of the wonderful and wild in literature ; but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources—the romances and chivalry of the middle ages ; but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those

days. Under the influence of these, he, at the age of fifteen, wrote two short prose romances of slender merit. The sentiments and language were exaggerated, the composition imitative and poor. He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus—being led to it by a German fragment he picked up, dirty and torn, in Lincoln's-inn-Fields. This fell afterwards into other hands—and was considerably altered before it was printed. Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown to him. The love and knowledge of nature developed by Wordsworth—the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge's poetry—and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey, composed his favourite reading; the rhythm of *Queen Mab* was founded on that of *Thalaba*, and the first few lines bear a striking resemblance in spirit, though not in idea, to the opening of that poem. His fertile imagination, and ear, tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. From his boyhood he had a wonderful facility of versification which he carried into another language, and his Latin school verses were composed with an ease and correctness that procured for him prizes—and caused him to be resorted to by all his friends for help. He was, at the period of writing *Queen Mab*, a great traveller within the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland. His time was spent among the loveliest scenes of these countries.

Mountain and lake and forest were his home ; the phenomena of nature were his favourite study. He loved to inquire into their causes, and was addicted to pursuits of natural philosophy and chemistry, as far as they could be carried on as an amusement. These tastes gave truth and vivacity to his descriptions, and warmed his soul with that deep admiration for the wonders of nature which constant association with her inspired.

He never intended to publish *Queen Mab* as it stands ; but a few years after, when printing *Alastor*, he extracted a small portion which he entitled "*The Dæmon of the World ;*" in this he changed somewhat the versification—and made other alterations scarcely to be called improvements.

I extract the invocation of *Queen Mab* to the Soul of *Ianthe*, as altered in "*The Dæmon of the World.*" I give it as a specimen of the alterations made. It well characterises his own state of mind :

Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit
From ruin of divinest things,
Feelings that lure thee to betray,
And light of thoughts that pass away.

For thou hast earned a mighty boon ;
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom and faith and power thou spurnest,
From hate and fear thy heart is free ;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest
For dark and cold mortality ;
A living light to cheer it long,
The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore, from nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic Spirit, be it thine
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where the vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

All that inspires thy voice of love,
Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
Or through thy frame doth burn and move,
Or think, or feel, awake, arise !
Spirit, leave for mine and me
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry !

Some years after, when in Italy, a bookseller published an edition of *Queen Mab* as it originally stood. Shelley was hastily written to by his friends, under the idea that, deeply injurious as the mere distribution of the poem had proved, the publication might awaken fresh persecutions. At the suggestion of these friends he wrote a letter on the subject, printed in "*The Examiner*" newspaper—with which I close this history of his earliest work.

TO THE EDITOR OF "*THE EXAMINER*."

"SIR,

"Having heard that a poem, entitled '*Queen Mab*,' has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair, as it relates to me.

"A poem, entitled '*Queen Mab*,' was written by me, at the age of eighteen, I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and imma-

ture. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression ; and I regret this publication not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale ; but after the precedent of Mr. Southey's 'Wat Tyler,' (a poem, written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm,) with little hope of success.

"Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem ; it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity or the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation and imprisonment, and invective and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

"Sir,

"I am your obliged and obedient servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY.

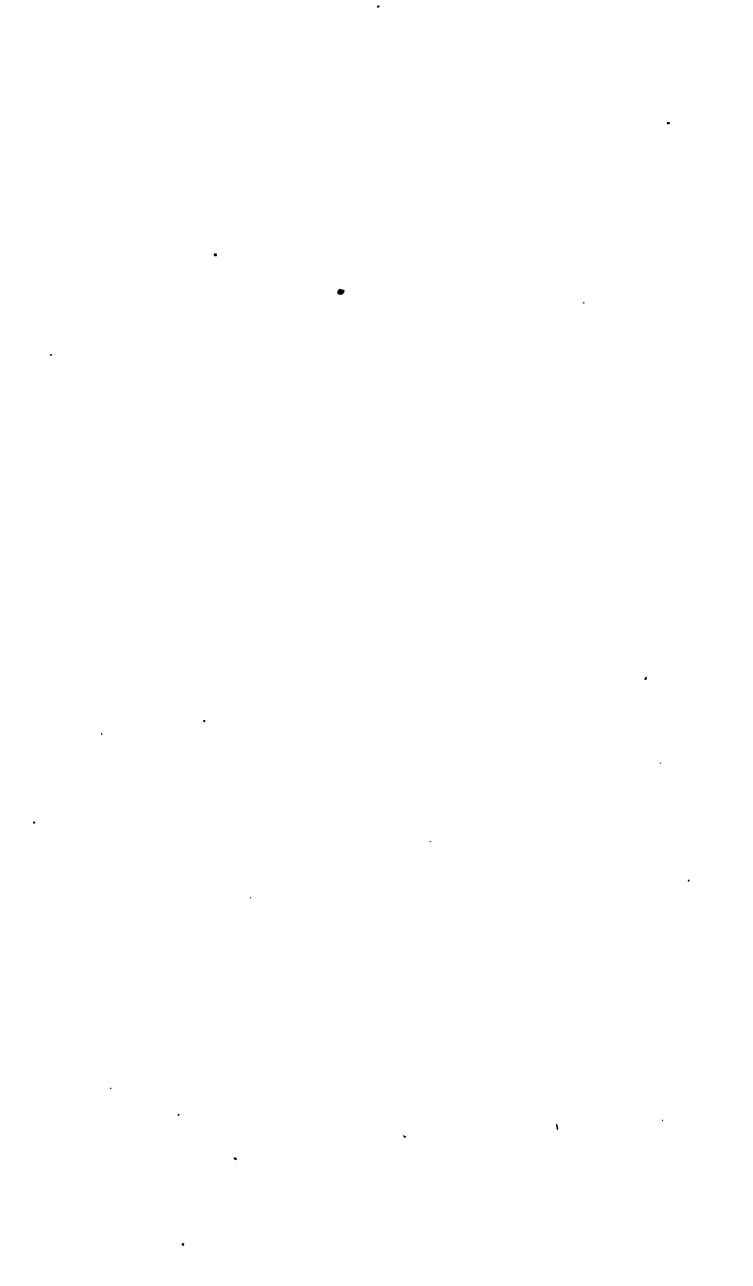
"Pisa, June 22, 1821."



ALASTOR;
OR,
THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem
amans amare.

Confess. St. August.



PREFACE.

THE poem entitled "Alastor," may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius, led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened, and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations, unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover, could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to

too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious, as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief ; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer's dust
Burn to the socket !

December 14, 1815.

ALASTOR ;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

EARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood !
If our great Mother have imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred ;—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now !

Mother of this unfathomable world !
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge : and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary ;
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain

May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness ;
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :
Gentle, and brave, and generous, no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
He lived, he died, he sang, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy

Fled not his thirsting lips ; and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home,
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He, like her shadow, has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke ; or where bitumen lakes,
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder ; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,

Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old :
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoever of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia on her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He linger'd, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed

And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid

Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind ; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips

Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sank and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom :—she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight ? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation ? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade ;

He overleaps the bounds. Alas ! alas !
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously ? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape ! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep ? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapours
 hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms ?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight

O'er the wide æry wilderness : thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on,
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind

With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career : the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—“ Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird ! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,

Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts ?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around :
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny: sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft

On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's
scourge

Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate :
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks

O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
Bursting and eddying irresistibly,
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths

Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long."

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Day-light shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow ;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,

Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall? A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud

Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun

Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of those æry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate—the oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starr'd with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs

Uniting their close union ; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute, yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with
jasmine,

A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half seen ; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms ;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliated lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect, floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines

Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrow'd from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only—when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness,—two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seem'd with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell

Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—“ O stream !
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
Have each their type in me : And the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind !”

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went ; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went

Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white ; and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs : so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands

Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world : for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracks and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause,
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice, and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped

The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethentially pale,
Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank

Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasp'd in his embrace.—O, storm of death !
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night :
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world ;
Glutted with which thou may'st repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place

His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm ;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept : no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved

An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched forever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchymy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn

Robes in its golden beams,—ah ! thou hast fled !
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice :—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas !
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe too “ deep for tears,” when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,

Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

NOTE ON ALASTOR.

BY THE EDITOR.

"ALASTOR" is written in a very different tone from "Queen Mab." In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth—all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny of his fellow-creatures, gave birth. "Alastor," on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say, that in all he did, he, at the time of doing it, believed himself justified to his own conscience ; while the various

ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward ; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul, than to glance abroad, and to make, as in "Queen Mab," the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the spring of 1815, an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption ; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place ; and though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the Peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. This river navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of "Thalaba," his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishop-

gate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making the voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Crichlade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. "Alastor" was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak shades of Windsor Great Park ; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest scenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspect of the visible universe inspires, with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts, give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near, he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout : it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic

than narrative : it was the out-pouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.

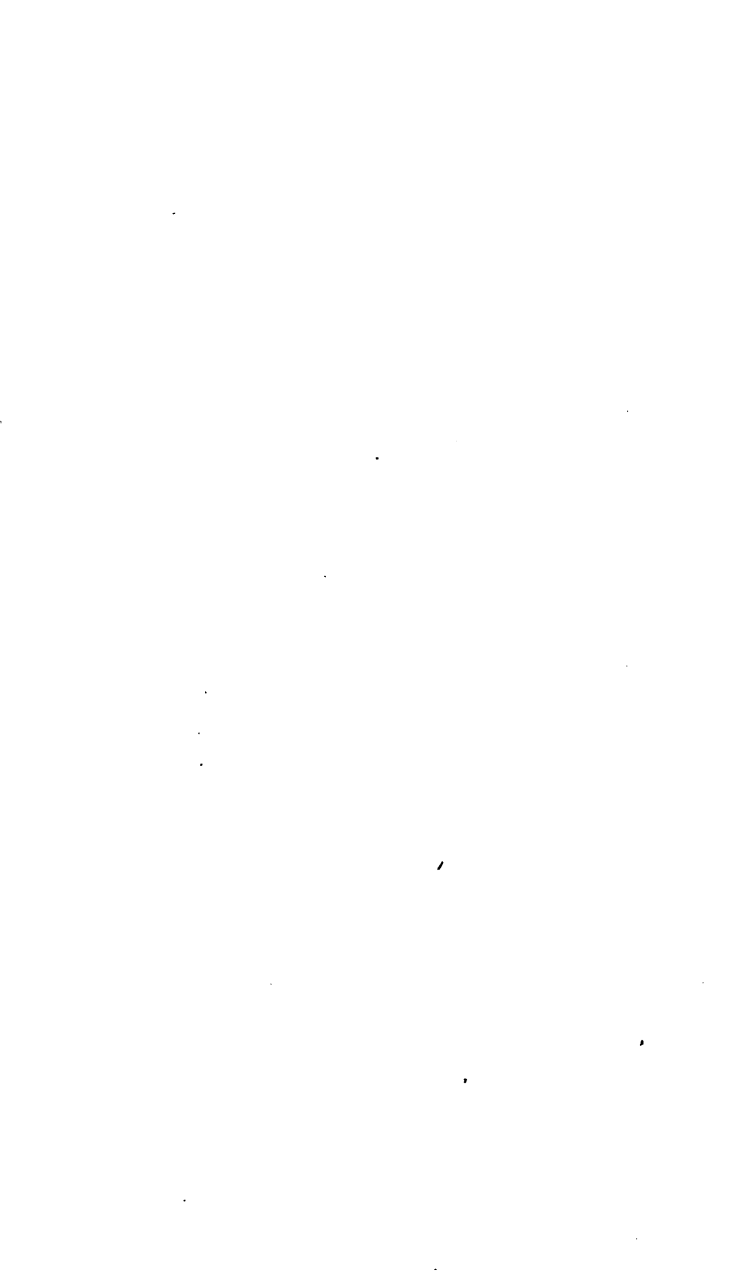
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

A Poem.

IN TWELVE CANTOS.

Οσais δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίais ἀπτόμεσθα
Περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
Πλὸν· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὖροις
Ἐς ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματοῦν ὁδόν.

Πινδ. Πυθ. x.



PREFACE.

THE Poem which I now present to the world, is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality ; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose, I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem, therefore, (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory,) is narrative, not didactic. It is a suc-

cession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind ; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses ; its impatience at "all the oppressions which are done under the sun ;" its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind ; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency ; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom ; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission ; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy ; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers ; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity ; the faithlessness of tyrants ; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms ; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power ; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections ; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty ; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has

ceased to be believed, that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries, were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness, is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven, after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected, as it was impossible to realise. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which, one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and

long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good, have been morally ruined, by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,* and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those† of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character, designing that even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still

* I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions;" a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

† It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "ESSAY ON POPULATION" to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "POLITICAL JUSTICE."

be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words, to divert the attention of the reader from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which, genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes, I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests: *Danger*, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the Poets and the Historians, and the Metaphy-

sicians * whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer, do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic Poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakspeare, Spenser, the Dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon; † the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded; —all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakspeare, than Shakspeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men, than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler, nor the sublimest genius of any era, can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

* In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakspeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity: you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed, also, by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts, can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age, that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract from the midst of insult, and contempt, and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would

be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigotted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps, would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed

fresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature, which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

DEDICATION.

There is no danger to a Man, that knows
What life and death is: there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge ; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.

CHAPMAN.

TO MARY ——— ———.

I.

So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home ;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome ;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

II.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour
Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet !
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlaced branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when
first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep : a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why : until there rose
From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around,
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
So without shame, I spake :—" I will be wise,

And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

v.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind ;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

vi.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one !—
Such once I sought in vain ; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone :—
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

VII.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain,
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walk'd as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

VIII.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now : no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

IX.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born

To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

x.

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
Holier than was Amphion's ? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.



xi.

And what art thou ? I know, but dare not speak :
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

xii.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.

I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

. XIII.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home :—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
If there must be no response to my cry—
If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

CANTO I.

I.

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had failed
Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aërial promontory,
Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was hoary;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
Each cloud, and every wave :—but transitory
The calm : for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,

Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow :—not a sound
Was heard ; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the
ground.

III.

Hark ! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See ! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath : it rages on,
Onemighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald : calm was spread
On all below ; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V.

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene ; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seemed to lie
Far, deep, and motionless ; while through the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Past on, in slow and moving majesty ;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI.

I could not choose but gaze ; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remained :—the hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear ;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth
quiver,

Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour ;
So, from that chasm of light a winged Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came : the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and
warm.

viii.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath ; a monstrous sight !
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight :—
And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
Before the ærial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

ix.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed therein—
Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
Shone through the plumes ; its coils were twined within
By many a swollen and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

x.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

xi.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wond'rous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

xii.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamant coil,

Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck
Dissolve in sudden shock those linked rings,
Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
Thus long, but unprevailing :—the event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length :
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream the Eagle past,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
Only, it was strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
Of sun-set sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm : down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI.

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand
Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
An icy wilderness—each delicate hand
Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fallen, and so she sate
Looking upon the waves ; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII.

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe ;

For in the tears which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung : she watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quivered ; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes ; no voice of wail
Escaped her ; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair,
Poured forth her voice ; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone ;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known,
His native tongue and hers ; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX.

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and all between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien ;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth :—one moment seen,
For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest, in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the day-light lingereth in the skies
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
And said : To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep :
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go ?

His head is on her heart, and who can know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey ?—
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow ;
And that strange boat, like the moon's shade did
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay. [sway

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea ; and now
We are embarked, the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV.

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale !
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine ; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And, ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

Speak not to me, but hear ! much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn :
Know then, that from the depth of ages old
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential
Nought.

XXVI.

The earliest dweller of the world alone
Stood on the verge of chaos : Lo ! afar
O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar :
A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
That fair star fell, he turned and shed his brother's
blood.

XXVII.

Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names ; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,

For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good—for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things,
Was Evil's breath and life : this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings ;
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed, and blasphemed him as he past ; for none
Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend
did own.

XXIX.

The fiend, whose name was Legion ; Death, Decay,
Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
Winged and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale ;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head ;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX.

His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language dwell ;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men—invisible,
But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black winged demon forms—whom, from the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI.

In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations—soon the Spirit of Good,
Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled ; and with that fiend of
 blood
Renewed the doubtful war—thrones then first shook,
And earth's immense and trampled multitude,
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII.

Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame

Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive ;
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth, with custom's hydra brood,
Wage silent war ;—when priests and kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts, a host of hopes assemble,
The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations
tremble !

XXXIV.

Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears ;
Though thou may'st hear that earth is now become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV.

List, stranger, list ! mine is a human form,
Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now !
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep
In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen ;
And near the waves, and through the forests wild,
I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled,
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky :
But, when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII.

These were forebodings of my fate.—Before
A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore :
A dying poet gave me books, and blest

With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away—
A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains—and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold,
I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not ; and Wisdom had unrolled
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe :
To few can she that warning vision show,
For I loved all things with intense devotion ;
So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide
emotion.

XXXIX.

When first the living blood through all these veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth ;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness
Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth—
And laughed in light and music : soon, sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL.

Deep slumber fell on me :—my dreams were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o'er my brain ; and strange desire,
The tempest of a passion, raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,
Which past ; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far
Came—then I loved ; but not a human lover !
For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
Shone through the woodbine wreaths which round my
casement were.

XLI.

'Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
I watched, till by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea ;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought—one image—yea, for ever !
Even like the day's-spring, poured on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished
never.

XLII.

The day past thus: at night, methought in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear ;
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere ;

A winged youth, his radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star : a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss.

XLIII.

And said : A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth ? Then joy and sleep
Together fled ; my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep ;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream ; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore : that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV.

How, to that vast and peopled city led,
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men.
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace, and power, and fame ; and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth:

XLV.

Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said—
Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead ;
The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustained his child : the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
These were his voice, and well I understood
His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with
delight.

XLVI.

In lonely glens amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell ; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them :—know thou alone,
That after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awakened by a shriek of woe ;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.

XLVII.

Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart !
Fear it ! she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more : that silence made me start—
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,

Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—
Wild music woke me: we had past the ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noon-tide day.
Ethereal mountains shone around—a Fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream,
Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe,
Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
Or sculpture's marble language, can invest
That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburthened breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose bloomy forests starred the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap :
We disembarked, and through a portal wide
We passed—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought; immoveable, deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drunk the lightning's sheen
In darkness, and now poured it through the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen

Its blinding splendour—through such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare ;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And horned moons, and meteors strange and fair,
On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere !

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day ;
And on the jasper walls around, there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display ;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their winged dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV.

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
The Great, who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind.
Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind ;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair ;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the
crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
And fell ; and vanished slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its sphered stars with supernatural night.

LVI.

Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide
In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
They round each other rolled, dilating more
And more—then rose, commingling into one,
One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven ; beneath the planet sate a Form,
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm

Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine—He sate
Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow—a hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength : an eye of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly ;
And a voice said—Thou must a listener be
This day—two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn ;
A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn !

LIX.

I looked, and lo ! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curved lips half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful : but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloke,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone :—
None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

CANTO II.

I.

THE star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded
powers.

II.

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead :—but others came
Soon, in another shape : the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state;
Yet flattering power had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave :—'twas fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
In evil, slave and despot ; fear with lust,
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended

The colours of the air since first extended
It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
To see or feel : a darkness had descended
On every heart : the light which shows its worth,
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI.

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind,
All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants :—a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned ; behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from
shore.

VII.

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death !—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern !

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage ; body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness lent,
Made all its many names omnipotent ;
All symbols of things evil, all divine ;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX.

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale ;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare ; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts :—a tameless multitude.

X.

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise ; in the northern Heaven,

Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale ;
Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail !

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds ;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak ; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet become !
Aye, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII.

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long,
 Sons of the glorious dead ! have ye lain bound
 In darkness and in ruin.—Hope is strong,
 Justice and Truth their winged child have found—
 Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
 Of your career shall scatter in its gust
 The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
 Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
 Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust.

XIV.

It must be so.—I will arise and waken
 The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
 Which on a sudden from its snows had shaken
 The swoon of ages, it shall burst, and fill
 The world with cleansing fire ; it must, it will—
 It may not be restrained !—and who shall stand
 Amid the rocking earthquake stedfast still,
 But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
 A tower whose marble walls the leagued storms withstand !

XV.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
 Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
 I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ;
 And ever from that hour upon me lay

The burthen of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast :
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest,
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

xvi.

These hopes found words thro' which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language ; and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Thro' darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.

xvii.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother ;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep :
And that his friend was false, may now be said
Calmly—that he like other men could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less
With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds, which leave where they have past
A path of light, my soul communion knew ;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew

Words which were weapons;—round my heart there
The adamantine armour of their power, [grew
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI.

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Were load-stars of delight, which drew me home
When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child: so when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought,
Some tale, or thine own fancies, would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had
wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert ; she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's
dark stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair ;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
This child of twelve years old—so she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet

Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wide and old, and lawny dells,
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine : she followed where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste, but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind : then Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us :
And, when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions over her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII.

And, in the murmur of her dreams, was heard
Sometimes the name of Laon :—suddenly
She would arise, and, like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents—a wild melody!
Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
The source of passion, whence they rose to be
Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung.

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate
Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong
Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse

The cloud of that unutterable curse
 Which clings upon mankind :—all things became
 Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
 Earth, sea, and sky, the planets, life, and fame,
 And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

xxx.

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
 Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
 The very wind on which it rolls away :
 Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed
 With music and with light, their fountains flowed
 In poesy ; and her still and earnest face,
 Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
 Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
 Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned
 to trace.

xxxii.

In me, communion with this purest being
 Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
 In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind seeing,
 Left in the human world few mysteries :
 How without fear of evil or disguise
 Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and mild,
 Which death, or pain, or peril, could despise,
 Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius wild,
 Yet mighty, was inclosed within one simple child !

XXXIII.

New lore was this—old age with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought : it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world : thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway .
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find :
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,

Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had indued
My purpose with a wider sympathy ;
Thus, Cythna mourn'd with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mewed,
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves:
She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyena lust, who, among graves,
Over his loathed meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her :—"Cythna
Well with the world art thou unreconciled ; [sweet,
Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace ; and ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
This slavery must be broken"—as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly :—" It shall be mine,
This task, mine, Laon !—thou hast much to gain ;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City."—Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not.—" Wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And, though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

" Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be ;
Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,

So to become most good, and great, and free ;
Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI.

“Thinkest thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me ? I remember now,
How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die,
Was saved, because in accents sweet and low
He sang a song his Judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death.—All shall relent
Who hear me—tears as mine have flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world ; a will omnipotent !

XLII.

“Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,
There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII.

“Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air
To the corruption of a closed grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors? In their home
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary crime would come
Behind, and fraud rebuild religion’s tottering dome.

XLIV.

“I am a child:—I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever—truth its radiant stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm
Upon her children’s brow, dark falsehood to disarm.

XLV.

“Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land

I shall remain alone—and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

“Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire, which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
Of evil catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them ;—Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's
den.

XLVII.

“We part!—O Laon, I must dare, nor tremble,
To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke!
Sweet brother of my soul; can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?”—As thus she spoke
The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears—sudden she woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly prest
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possest.

XLVIII.

“ We part to meet again—but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress :
Nor doth the grave—I fear ’tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven :—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.”

XLIX.

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow ;
So we arose, and by the star-light steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But pale, were calm.—With passion thus subdued
Like evening shades that o’er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home ; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO III.

I.

WHAT thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber
That night, I know not ; but my own did seem
As if they might ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream,
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind ; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme :
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds past,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make grey the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space :
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled :
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna ; drooping briony, pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate, to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be,
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown
In this strange vision, so divine to me,
That if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon—when, suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete,
And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V.

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
Through the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me;—through the darkness spread

Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
Upon my flight ; and ever as we fled,
They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

And ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far, and low,
Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek,
And, grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry !
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage :—so I past quietly
Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene, and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me :
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her—
“ Farewell ! farewell ! ” she said, as I drew nigh.
“ At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX.

“ Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope :
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend !
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.”

X.

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
With seeming careless glance ; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew

To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty !

XI.

What followed then, I know not—for a stroke
On my raised arm and naked head came down,
Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path were bearing me : below
The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had many a landmark ; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken day-light far through the ærial waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there :
And one did strip me stark ; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool ; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torches' fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height :—the grate of brass
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas !
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound :
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

XV.

The noon was calm and bright :—around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea
Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,

So that I knew not my own misery :
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar ; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI.

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air :—so bright, that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night, all else was clearly shown
In the broad glare, yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII.

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon !
A ship was lying on the sunny main ;
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again
Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold :
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII.

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapt
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapt.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark :
Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more !—I sought to close mine eyes,
But, like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark ;
I would have risen, but, ere that I could rise,
My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die :
O Liberty ! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me, if, reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
Into my soul—linked remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX.

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I questioned not ; nor, though the Sun
Its shafts of agony kindling through the air
Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,

Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI.

Two days thus past—I neither raved nor died—
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails : I had spurned aside
The water-vessel, while despair possest
My thoughts, and now no drop remained ! The uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left, was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
 I well remember—like a quire of devils,
 Around me they involved a giddy dance ;
 Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
 Of ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels,
 Foul, ceaseless shadows :—thought could not divide
 The actual world from these entangling evils,
 Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried
 All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
 Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
 That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
 Was not a phantom of the realms accurst,
 Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first
 I know not yet, was it a dream or no.
 But both, though not distincter, were immersed
 In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
 Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that gate was lifted, and the seven
 Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
 And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
 Hung them on high by the entangled hair :

Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair :
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
Hung there, the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
Those horny eyes ? whose was that withered form ?
Alas, alas ! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth !—a whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tost.

XXVII.

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
And, dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine :—in the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful ; that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and
weep.

XXVIII.

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon ;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines ; the grate did then uncloze,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled :
As they were loosened by that Hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
To answer those kind looks.—He did enfold
His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves :—the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair
did bound

XXX.

As, lifting me, it fell !—What next I heard,
Were billows leaping on the harbour bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
My hair ;—I looked abroad, and saw a star

Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI.

For now, indeed, over the salt sea billow
I sailed : yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow
For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
Fearing it was a fiend : at last, he bent
O'er me his aged face ; as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
Though he said little, did he speak to me.
“It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!”
I joyed as those a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams,
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean-streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind, steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly ;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO IV.

I.

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone ;
It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark
With blooming ivy trails was overgrown ;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that grey tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood.

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few, but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen.—We came at last
To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
The old man opened them ; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home :
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray,
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains :—did my spirit wake
From sleep, as many-coloured as the snake
That girds eternity ? in life and truth,
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake ?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth ?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness ;
That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,

By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good :
When I was healed, he led me forth to show
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.



VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told ; like mine own heart,
Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips—it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When 'mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled,
My thoughts their due array did re-assume
Through the enchantments of that Hermit old ;
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot,
And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves ;—his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed.
Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts :—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
Which made them abject, would preserve them so ;
And in such faith, some stedfast joy to know,
He sought this cell : but, when fame went abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood ;

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide,
His spirit leaped within his aged frame ;
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame

Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came :
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword of truth—young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

xi.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
“ Since this,” the old man said, “ seven years are spent,
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept ; the hope which wildered it has lent,
Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

xii.

“ Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen ; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told ;
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

“In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind ;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind ;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find ;
And every bosom thus is wrapt and shook,
Like autumn’s myriad leaves in one swoln mountain
brook.

XIV.

“The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets ;
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart ; but when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Though he says nothing, that the truth is known ;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV.

“Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,

Bloody, and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide
array.

XVI.

“For I have been thy passive instrument”—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit’s)—“thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—aye, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high, which time, nor chance,
Nor change, may not extinguish, and my share
Of good was o’er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII.

“But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
And, though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell
My manners note that I did long repel;
But Laon’s name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

XVIII.

“Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
Wouldst rise; perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The tyrant’s heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear;
And with these quiet words—‘for thine own sake
I prithee spare me,’—did with ruth so take

XIX.

“All hearts, that even the torturer, who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosened her weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her—unassailed
Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled
In virtue’s adamantine eloquence,
’Gainst scorn, and death, and pain, thus trebly mailed,
And blending in the smiles of that defence,
The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

XX.

“The wild-eyed women throng around her path:
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor’s wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust,

They congregate :—in her they put their trust ;
The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell
Her power ;—they, even like a thunder gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI.

“ Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long ;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be strong ;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng !
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite.

XXII.

“ And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness :—
In squalid huts, and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII.

“So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene’er with chains o’erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,
False arbiter between the bound and free ;
And o’er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms ; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling
 thrones.

XXIV.

“Blood soon, although unwillingly to shed
The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array—‘she paves
Her path with human hearts,’ and o’er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV.

“There is a plain beneath the City’s wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast ;
Millions there lift at Freedom’s thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide ; they load the blast

Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptred foe :
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath past away, doth know—
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow ?

XXVI.

“ The tyrant’s guards resistance yet maintain :
Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood ;
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain ;
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy—ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude
Surrounding them, with words of human love,
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII.

“ Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around
The watch of love is kept :—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope—as when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and
clouds confound,
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause, and oh ! may freemen ne’er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread, the murderer !

XXVIII.

“ If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
A wretched fall!—uplift thy charmed voice,
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
Arise, my friend, farewell!”—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
And then my youth fell on me like a wind
Descending on still waters—my thin hair
Was prematurely grey, my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX.

And though their lustre now was spent and faded,
Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—

One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant—'twas her lover's face—
It might resemble her—it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI.

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
Which steeped its skirts in gold? or dark, and lone,
Doth it not through the paths of night unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne
Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shown,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
My way. O'er many a mountain chain which rears
Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
And gaily now me seems serene earth wears
The bloomy spring's star-bright investiture,
A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Through many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow ;—my own Cythna was
Not like a child of death, among them ever ;
When I arose from rest, a woeful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

XXXIV.

Aye, as I went, that maiden, who had reared
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or weeds !
Could she be Cythna ?—Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds ?
Why was this hope not torture ? yet it made
A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO V.

I.

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep :—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp, below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow,
The City's moon-lit spires and myriad lamps,
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earth-
quake stamps.

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light,
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound—Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night !
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight
Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng ; a war that never failed !

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went ;
The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
An armed youth—over his spear he bent
His downward face.—“ A friend ! ” I cried aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme !
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim :
And all the while, methought, his voice did swim,
As if it drowned in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim :
At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder, “ Thou art here ! ”

V.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found ;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,

And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded.
The truth now came upon me, on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI.

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread,
As from the earth did suddenly arise ;
From every tent, roused by that clamour dread,
Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped
Towards the sound : our tribes were gathering far,
Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war,
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to
spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food, when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp ;—they overbear
The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
Descends like night—when “ Laon ! ” one did cry :
Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
The slaves, and, widening through the vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale :
But, swifter still, our hosts encompassed
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
Hemmed them around !—and then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail :
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
I rushed before its point, and cried, “ Forbear, forbear !”

IX.

The spear transfixed my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—“ Oh ! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus !”—I cried in joy, “ thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
'Tis well ! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X.

“ Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep !
Alas, what have ye done ? The slightest pain
Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep ;

But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe ;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI.

“ O wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain for ever breed ?
We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
For hire, are men ; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart ! O Earth, O Heaven !
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
And all that lives, or is to be, hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven.

XII.

“ Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts.”—A film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose ;

XIII.

And one, whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
With quivering lips and humid eyes ;—and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
In a strange land, round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation
Towards the City, then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love ;—a mighty brotherhood
Linked by a jealous interchange of good ;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves, arrayed in gold and blood ;
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV.

Afar, the City walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky,
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung ;

As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had past.

XVI.

Our armies through the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there;
And, as we passed through the calm sunny air,
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision :
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled,
Because they had done evil :—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
“The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!” and fair eyes, gifted
With feelings caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun,—
Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
Where was Laone now?—The words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
And when at length one brought reply, that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even though that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate

Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant!—Silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment!—She knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
'Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers.—Our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
But on her forehead and within her eye
Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness ;—on the throne
She leaned. The King, with gathered brow and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded.
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast
O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanished days,—as the tears past
Which wrapt it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,

With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare :
Pity, not scorn, I felt, though desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave : through portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
And, as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the star-light ; wildered seemed she,
And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, “ She hungers, slave !
Stab her, or give her bread ! ”—It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known,
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
And she, a nursling of captivity,
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change
might be.

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly ; that sceptres ruled no more—
That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone
Which once made all things subject to its power—
Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
The past had come again ; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore
To desolateness, in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
The fallen tyrant ;—like the rush of showers
Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
From the wide multitude : that lonely man
Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which thro' his bosom ran.

XXX.

And he was faint withal. I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
Or her ;—when food was brought to them, her share

To his averted lips the child did bear;
But when she saw he had enough, she ate
And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Past, as when far is heard in some lone dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods—
And he is fallen! they cry; he who did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell,
Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
Of blood and tears with ruin! He is here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!

XXXII.

Then was heard—He who judged let him be brought
To judgment! Blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they, who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.

XXXIII.

“What do ye seek? what fear ye?” then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, “that ye should shed
The blood of Othman—if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven shed
In purest light above us all, through earth,
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles spread
For all, let him go free; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV.

“What call ye *justice*? Is there one who ne’er
In secret thought has wished another’s ill?—
Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas, such were not pure—the chastened will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.”

XXXV.

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
Paused as I spake; then those who near me were,
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair

Clasped on her lap in silence ;—through the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
In pity's madness, and, to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home, for his repose assigned,
Accompanied by the still throng he went
In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind,
Some likeness of his ancient state was lent ;
And, if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
His days in peace ; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that child like hope with fear was
blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day,
Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away,
Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
All went. The sleepless silence did recal
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great City, with a countenance pale
I went :—it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom :

XXXIX.

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
The signs of that innumerable host,
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tost,
While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

XL.

To see, like some vast island from the Ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i'the midst ; a work, which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,

Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east ; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps : that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius ; its still shadow hid
Far ships : to know its height the morning mists forbid !

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves ; and solemnly and slow
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams through floating clouds on waves below,
Falling in pauses from that Altar dim
As silver-sounding tongues breathed an ærial hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy ! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past outworn :
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled ;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled ;
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

To the great Pyramid I came : its stair
With female quires was thronged : the loveliest
Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare.
As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kist
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, drest
In earliest light by vintagers, and one
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne.

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
The faiths of men : all mortal eyes were drawn,
As famished mariners through strange seas gone,
Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
Of those divinest lineaments—alone [sight
With thoughts which none could share, from that fair
I turn'd in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance
bright.

XLV.

And, neither did I hear the acclamations,
Which from brief silence bursting, filled the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there

From the sleep of bondage ; nor the vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till, like a wind
To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted,
To one whom fiends enthral, this voice to me ;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea ;
As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously :
But soon her voice that calmness which it shed
Gathered, and—"Thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here," she said :
"I had a dear friend once, but he is dead !—
And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Should'st image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII.

“ For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me ?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply :—why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world, have borne me hither
To meet thee, long most dear ; and now unite
Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beats
together,

XLIX.

“ If our own will as others’ law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear ;
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind !”—
She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear ;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crowns ; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep ;

L.

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk ;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven’s when loveliest

In Autumn eves.—The third Image was drest
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies.
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, repress
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI.

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood, 'mid the throngs which ever ebb'd and flow'd
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch, which none who feels forgets, bestowed ;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great Image as o'er Heaven it glode,
That rite had place ; it ceased when sunset's blaze
Burn'd o'er the isles ; all stood in joy and deep amaze ;

When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair.

1.

“Calm art thou as yon sunset ! swift and strong
As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning ;
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly,
Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—

Hark ! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy ;
Its free spirits here assembled,
See thee, feel thee, know thee now :—
To thy voice their hearts have trembled,
Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies !
Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee, and the elements they chain
And their own will to swell the glory of thy train.

2.

“ O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven !
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo ! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert,
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee :—now, millions start
To feel thy lightnings through them burning :
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy, the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us ;—Scorn and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness, are desolate—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free !

3.

“Eldest of things, divine Equality !

Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought,
And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee :

The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming ; thou in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own,
Like the spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,

Comest upon the paths of men !—

Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4.

“My brethren, we are free ! the plains and mountains,
The grey sea-shore, the forests, and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers ;—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow !
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.

A stormy night's serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants, without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie

In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;
The dawn of mind, which, upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace !

5.

“ My brethren, we are free ! the fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming ;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
 To feed disease and fear and madness,
 The dwellers of the earth and air
 Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
 Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free !

6.

“ Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations !
Bear witness, Night, and ye, mute Constellations,
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars !
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more !
Victory ! Victory ! Earth's remotest shore,

Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves, and wildernesses
Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions :
Kings shall turn pale ! Almighty Fear,
The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire
reigns !"

LII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining
Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng ;
She, like a spirit through the darkness shining,
In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong,
As if to lingering winds they did belong,
Poured forth her inmost soul : a passionate speech
With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIII.

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
The withered leaves of Autumn to the lake,
And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
In the shadow of the shores ; as dead leaves wake
Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make

Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
 The multitude so moveless did partake
 Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
 As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV.

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
 In groups around the fires, which from the sea
 Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
 Blazed wide and far : the banquet of the free
 Was spread beneath many a dark cypress tree,
 Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red light,
 Reclining as they ate, of Liberty,
 And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
 Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV.

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
 Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
 In the embrace of Autumn ;—to each other
 As when some parent fondly reconciles
 Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
 With her own sustenance ; they relenting weep :
 Such was this Festival, which from their isles,
 And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
 All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or
 creep.

LVI.

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
 Or poison none this festal did pollute,

But piled on high, an overflowing store
 Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
 Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
 Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes, ere yet
 Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
 Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
 In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
 And every deepest look and holiest mind
 Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
 Were silent as she past; she did unwind
 Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
 She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
 From seeking her that night, so I reclined
 Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
 A festal watch-fire burned beside the dusky main.

LVIII.

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
 And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
 While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
 That flow among the isles, held us in chains
 Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
 Who feels: but, when his zone grew dim in mist
 Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
 The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
 Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

CANTO VI.

I.

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars ; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapt
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams,
Of the last watch-fire fell, and darkness wrapt
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapt.

II.

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate, then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall :
And first, one pale and breathless past us by,
And stared and spoke not ;—then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

III.

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded : and—" They come ! to arms ! to arms !
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name ! to arms !"
In vain : for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I
wept !

IV.

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia.—Louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V.

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout to have repelled

That miserable flight—one moment quelled
By voice, and looks, and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI.

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
Who hears its fatal roar :—the files compact
Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm :—into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive,
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's blood-hounds with their prey,
Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes; the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire :—when the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle.

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—
I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light,
I trod ;—to me there came no thought of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn which whose heard
That dreaded death, felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success ; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop ; not overthrown
It gain'd the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X.

Immovably we stood—in joy I found,
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine

With a mild look of courage answered mine,
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment—now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying cry,
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horsemen hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them :—flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts ; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in their blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink, a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights : a shout of joyance sent
Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized ; and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

XIV.

That onset turned the foes to flight almost ;
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory ; so dismounting close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible ;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands for ever.

XV.

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood
To mutual ruin armed by one behind,
Who sits and scoffs !—That friend so mild and good,

Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair,
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst
I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell,
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
Alternate victory and defeat, and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

XVII.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
Want, and Moon-madness, and the Pest's swift bane
When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathed slave. I saw all shapes of death,
And minister'd to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sun-beam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm,
Around me fought. At the decline of day,
Winding above the mountain's snowy term,
New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands
I soon survived alone—and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands:

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering.—Lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling o'er the dead; the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword;—the hosts recede
And fly, as through their ranks, with awful might,
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and
bright;

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And marked its coming; it relaxed its course
As it approached me, and the wind that flows
Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force

Might create smiles in death.—The Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
“Mount with me, Laon, now”—I rapidly obeyed.

xxi.

Then “Away! away!” she cried, and stretched her
sword
As ’t were a scourge over the courser’s head,
And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word,
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread,
Like the pine’s locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o’er their glimmering forms the steed’s broad shadow
past;

xxii.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
And turbulence, as if a whirlwind’s gust
Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
Through the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean :—
From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted
By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
To music, by the wand of Solitude,
That wizzard wild, and the far tents implanted
Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curved flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen—another
Past ; and the two who stood beneath that night,
Each only heard, or saw, or felt, the other ;
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet Cythna looked,) with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV.

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested :
At length she looked on me, and half unclosing

Her tremulous lips, said : " Friend, thy bands were
The battle, as I stood before the King [losing
In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI.

" Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here."—Then, turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed ;—
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And kissing her fair eyes, said, " Thou hast need
Of rest," and I heaped up the courser's bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood ; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress ;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us through caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air ;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX.

To the pure all things are pure ! Oblivion wrapt
Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapt,
Though linked years had bound it there ; for now

A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air.

XXXI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech :—the youthful years
Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII.

Had found a voice :—and ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and through a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre ; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among ;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

xxxiii.

The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
Of her soft hair, which bent with gathered weight
My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which spring but half
uncloses.

xxxiv.

The meteor to its far morass returned :
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still ; and then I felt the blood that burned
Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire ; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

xxxv.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone

Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons and mankind, their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb,
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Through tears of a wide mist, boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
Where far over the world those vapours roll,
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not from that green
And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
Our linked frames, till, from the changing sky,
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom :—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look ;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook.

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linked youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest,
strong.

XL.

And such is Nature's law divine, that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might move

All gentlest thoughts ; as in the sacred grove
Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sun-beams
smile ;

XLI.

And clings to them, when darkness may dis sever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we for ever
Were linked, for love had nurst us in the haunts
Where knowledge from its secret source enchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants,
As the great Nile feeds Egypt ; ever flinging
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are
swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams ; they rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,—
And so we sate, until our talk befel
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison : well
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were
gone

XLIII.

Since she had food :—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane,
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again,
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed—the tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain
Floating at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly;
And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread

His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings ;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood,
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm ; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls ;—the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst ;—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there ;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman,
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she

Was withered from a likeness of aught human
 Into a fiend, by some strange misery:
 Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
 And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
 With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
 And cried, "Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
 The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the
 draught!

XLIX.

"My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry
 Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
 When I came home, one in the blood did lie
 Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
 Since then I have no longer been a mother,
 But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither
 I flit about, that I may slay and smother;—
 All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
 But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

L.

"What seekest thou here? the moonlight comes in
 flashes,—
 The dew is rising dankly from the dell—
 'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
 In my sweet boy—now full of worms—but tell
 First what thou seek'st."—"I seek for food."—" 'Tis
 well,
 Thou shalt have food; Famine, my paramour,
 Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell

Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no
more!"

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse :—at length
We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes ; silent and stark they sate.

LII.

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried : " Eat !
Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die !"
And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
Towards her bloodless guests ;—that sight to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy ;
But now I took the food that woman offered me ;

LIII.

And vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,

As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me, and the mountain grey
Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate, with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet : she was most pale,
Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know ; the steed behind
Trode peacefully along the mountain waste,
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal :—as an autumnal blossom
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
Of health, and hope ; and sorrow languished near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO VII.

I.

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds ; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
By Liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude ;
And all that now I was, while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales ; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one ; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold tyrant's cruel lust : and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls ;
But she was calm and sad, musing away
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless ;
But when he bade her to his secret bower

Be borne a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not ; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dreams most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead—that night
All torture, fear, or horror, made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the tyrant fled away.

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul ; and words it gave,
Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
All who approached their sphere, like some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath ;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noon-day throne :
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill—distorted, bowed and bent.
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison ; who nought knew or meant
But to obey : from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke ;
They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ;—the Æthiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X.

“ Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
He plunged through the green silence of the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal flood

Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound: until the dark rocks under
He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

“A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling:
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Thro’ which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
Through which, his way the diver having cloven,
Past like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII.

“And then,” she said, “he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
Like an upaithric temple wide and high,
Whose æry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the
sun-beams fell.

XIII.

“ Below, the fountain’s brink was richly paven
With the deep’s wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there, when, thronging to the moon’s command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

“ The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile :
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the jailer, had been taught,
Of that strange dungeon ; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought,
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

XV.

“ The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,

Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there ;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food !—Thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore,
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

xvi.

“ Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle, and the fountain, and the air ;
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life :—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

xvii.

“ Methought I was about to be a mother—
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child ; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within—and when the rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII.

“It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
Thine own, beloved :—’twas a dream divine ;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
Though ’twas a dream.”—Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift :

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears ;
Which, having past, as one whom sobs oppress,
She spoke : “ Yes, in the wilderness of years
Her memory, aye, like a green home appears.
She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears ;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

“I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
Or sun, from many a prism within the cave

Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI.

“Methought her looks began to talk with me ;
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be,
That it was meaningless ; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept ; and on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
Both infants, weaving wings for time’s perpetual way.

XXII.

“Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother’s bosom :—from that night
She fled ;—like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest ;—and her flight,
Though ’twas the death of brainless phantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

“ It seemed that in the dreary night, the diver
Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before :
Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
But I was changed—the very life was gone
Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
Day after day, and sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV.

“ I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed :—in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
It ebbed even to its withered springs again :
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which would fain
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
With more than human love,—then left it unreturned.

XXV.

“ So now my reason was restored to me,
I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast ;

But all that cave and all its shapes possess
By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blest
Me heretofore : I, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

“ Time past, I know not whether months or years ;
For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears :
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
Till it be thin as air ; until, one even,
A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII.

“ And when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter ; on slow wing,
The Eagle, hovering o’er his prey, did float ;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o’er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII.

“This wakened me, it gave me human strength ;
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length ;
My spirit felt again like one of those,
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave ?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

“And where was Laon ? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be ?
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
Which I had sworn to rend ? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
To bring me ropes ; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught ;
But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he
brought.

XXX.

“We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious phantasies of hope departed :
Aye, we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted.

Such power to me, I became fearless-hearted ;
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI.

“ My mind became the book through which I grew
Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
To me the keeping of its secrets gave—
One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear ;
Justice, and truth, and time, and the world’s natural
sphere.

XXXII.

“ And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought ;
Clear elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought :
The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotona ;—and sweet melodies
Of love, in that lone solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance har-
monize.

XXXIII.

“Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
As in a winged chariot, o’er the plain
Of crystal youth ; and thou wert there to fill
My heart with joy, and there we sate again
On the grey margin of the glimmering main,
Happy as then but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
Fear, Faith, and Slavery ; and mankind was free,
Equal, and pure, and wise, in wisdom’s prophecy.

XXXIV.

“For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtle ministries ;
And oft from that bright fountain’s shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise
To combat with my overflowing eyes,
And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
Familiar with the shock and the surprise
And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts
anew.

XXXV.

“And thus my prison was the populous earth—
Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth—
Religion’s pomp made desolate by the scorn

Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed
With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free,—a hope which we have nurst
Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI.

“All is not lost ! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even throned Evil's splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

“Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there ;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprise,
Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring's messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII.

“ So years had past, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern crackt
With sound, as if the world's wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wrackt ;
And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
The stifling waters :—when I woke, the flood,
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked,
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX.

“ Above me was the sky, beneath the sea :
I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep—anon
All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
I felt that I was free ! The Ocean-spray
Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play,
Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL.

“ My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest : day was almost over,

When through the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
The twilight deep ;—the mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI.

“ And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me ;—the sailors rowed
In awe through many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and questioned me, but, when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we past without a word.

CANTO VIII.

I.

“ I SAT beside the steersman then, and, gazing
Upon the west, cried, ‘ Spread the sails ! behold !
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet ;—the City of Gold
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold ;
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars ; they tremble with the cold !
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea ;—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny !’

II.

“ The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood
Aloof, and, whispering to the Pilot, said,
‘ Alas, alas ! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts : a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that !’ The Pilot then replied,
‘ It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride,
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.’

III.

“ We past the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
And thronged around to listen ;—in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attain, and my calm voice did rear ;
‘ Ye are all human—yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the self-same likeness wear.
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV.

“ ‘ What dream ye ? Your own hands have built a home,
Even for yourselves on a beloved shore :
For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
How they will greet him when his toils are o’er,
And laughing babes rush from the well-known door !
Is this your care ? ye toil for your own good—
Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
Such purposes ? or in a human mood,
Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude ?

V.

“ ‘ What is that Power ? Ye mock yourselves, and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know :
As if the cause of life could think and live !
’Twere as if man’s own works should feel, and show

The hopes, and fears, and thoughts, from which they
And he be like to them. Lo ! Plague is free [flow,
To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny.

VI.

“What is that Power? Some moon-struck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown ;
And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
Nursed by fear's dew of poison, grows thereon,
And that men say, that Power has chosen Death
On all who scorn its laws, to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

“Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
Or known from others who have known such things,
A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
Wields an invisible rod—that Priests and Kings,
Custom, domestic sway, aye, all that brings
Man's free-born soul beneath the oppressor's heel,
Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold
steel.

VIII.

“ ‘ And it is said, this Power will punish wrong ;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain !
And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among,
Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain,
Which, like a plague, a burthen, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived ;—for love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say are difference vain—
The will of strength is right—this human state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX.

“ ‘ Alas, what strength ? Opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow rests thereon,
One shape of many names :—for this ye plough
The barren waves of ocean ; hence each one
Is slave or tyrant ; all betray and bow,
Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X.

“ ‘ Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power—aye, the ghost, the dream, the shade, .
Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly ;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,

A law to which mankind has been betrayed ;
And human love, is as the name well known
Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and, into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI.

“ ‘ O love ! who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean’s weary waves !
Justice, or truth, or joy ! thou only can
From slavery and religion’s labyrinth caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of freedom, though through graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend’s
dearest blood.

XII.

“ ‘ To feel the peace of self-contentment’s lot,
To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
And, in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
Until life’s sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe ;
To live, as if to love and live were one,—
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII.

“ ‘ But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey—one rules another,
And as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother,
And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
Are darkened—Woman, as the bond-slave, dwells
Of man, a slave ; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV.

“ ‘ Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery ;—
In fear and restless care that he may live
He toils for others, who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity ;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin ;
He builds the altar, that its idol’s fee
May be his very blood ; he is pursuing
O, blind and willing wretch ! his own obscure undoing.

XV.

“ ‘ Woman !—she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home.
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,

As calm decks the false Ocean :—well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI.

“ ‘ This need not be ; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory ;
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light ; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon !—
Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII.

“ ‘ Let all be free and equal !—From your hearts
I feel an echo ; through my inmost frame
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts—
Whence come ye, friends ? Alas, I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
On your worn faces ; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts I in your looks behold.

XVIII.

“ ‘ Whence come ye, friends ? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth ? or bring ye steel and gold,

That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude ?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil ? unfold !
Speak ! are your hands in slaughter's sanguine hue
Stained freshly ? have your hearts in guile grown old ?
Know yourselves thus ? ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

xix.

“ Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home :
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime : the doom
Is this, which has, or may, or must, become
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

xx.

“ Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame ;
Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
Ah ! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery—all are mirrors of the same ;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI.

“ ‘ Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine,
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting ;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
When Amphisbænz some fair bird has tied,
Soon o’er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII.

“ ‘ Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
Nor hate another’s crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self,
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan ;
O vacant expiation ! be at rest.—
The past is Death’s, the future is thine own ;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.’

XXIII.

“ ‘ Speak thou ! whence come ye ? ’—A Youth made
‘ Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep [reply,
We sail ;—thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,

Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow ;
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

“ ‘ Yes—I must speak—my secret would have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes :—yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o’er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

“ ‘ We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
Are stained and trampled :—years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought ;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
She is my life,—I am but as the shade
Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI.

“ ‘ For she must perish in the tyrant’s hall—
Alas, alas ! ’—He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,

And still before the ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars 'gan to fail.
All round me gathered with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with grey locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

“ ‘Recede not ! pause not now ! thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love—behold !
The eternal stars gaze on us !—is the truth
Within your soul ? care for your own, or ruth
For other’s sufferings ? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent custom’s tooth
May violate ?—Be free ! and even here,
Swear to be firm till death !’ They cried, ‘ We swear !
we swear !’

XXVIII.

“ The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder at the cry ;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore ! Bolts were undrawn,
And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye
The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance
shone.

XXIX.

“ They were earth’s purest children, young and fair,
With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
And brows as bright as spring or morning, ere
Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
In characters of cloud which wither not.—
The change was like a dream to them ; but soon
They knew the glory of their altered lot,
In the bright wisdom of youth’s breathless noon,
Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX.

“ But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
Beneath a bright acacia’s shadowy hair,
Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
Showed that her soul was quivering ; and full soon
That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
On her and me, as for some speechless boon :
I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

CANTO IX.

I.

“THAT night we anchored in a woody bay,
And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has past away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
Whose heart is now at rest: thus night past over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars, pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II.

“The joyous mariners, and each free maiden,
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun’s path o’er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to
smile.

III.

“The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder ; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry,
Like earth’s own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty !
They heard !—As o’er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning’s birth :

IV.

“So from that cry over the boundless hills,
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano’s voice, whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark custom’s brood ;
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V.

“We reached the port—alas ! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,

Upon the night's devouring darkness shed :
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world ; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's
spasm !

VI.

“ I walked through the great City then, but free
From shame or fear ; those toil-worn Mariners
And happy Maidens did encompass me ;
And like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul, a murmur strange
Made as I past ; and many wept, with tears
Of joy and awe, and winged thoughts did range,
And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of
change.

VII.

“ For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
As one who from some mountain's pyramid,
Points to the unrisen sun !—the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
Wisdom the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII.

“ Some said I was a maniac wild and lost ;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
The Prophet’s virgin bride, a heavenly ghost :—
Some said I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o’er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain, came ;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

“ But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts : the purest and the best,
As friend with friend made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute ;—the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blest,
Leagued with me in their hearts ;—their meals, their
Their hourly occupations, were possest [slumber,
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares, which life’s strong wings
encumber.

X.

“ But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,—
They looked around, and lo ! they became free !

Their many tyrants sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain ;
For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye,
Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI.

“ Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt [round,
In the white furnace ; and a visioned swound,
A pause of hope and awe, the City bound,
Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

“ Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of truth and liberty,
Around the City millions gathered were,
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair ;
Words, which the lore of truth in hues of grace
Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odours floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in
flame.

XIII.

“ The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe’er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public
way.

XIV.

“ And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,
Because her sons were free,—and that among
Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
They said, that age was truth, and that the young
Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled the vain and
free.

XV.

“ And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse ;
There was one teacher, whom necessity

Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be ;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery.

XVI.

“ ‘ For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.’
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied ;
Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide ;
And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue, and wide,
Said, that the rule of men was over now,
And hence, the subject world to woman’s will must bow ;

XVII.

“ And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain ! The steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
Left Plague her banquet in the Æthiop’s hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man’s portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food : nor fear, nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope’s newly-kindled
flame.

XVIII.

“ For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew
Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the Priests stood alone within the fane ;
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain
The union of the free with discord’s brand to stain.

XIX.

“ The rest thou knowest.—Lo !—we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve nor fear,
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
I smile, though human love should make me weep.
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-
morrow.

XX.

“ We know not what will come—yet, Laon, dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of love,
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove

Within the homeless future's wintry grove ;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from stedfast truth, an unreturning stream.

XXI.

"The blasts of autumn drive the winged seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train ;
Behold ! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her ætherial wings ;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII.

"O Spring! of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness,
Wind-winged emblem ! brightest, best, and fairest !
Whence comest thou, when, with dark winter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest ?
Sister of joy ! thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet ;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

“Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven]
Truth’s deathless germs to thought’s remotest caves?
Lo, Winter comes!—the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith, the enchanter’s word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred.

XXIV.

“The seeds are sleeping in the soil: meanwhile
The tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey;
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And grey Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o’er human looks is cast.

XXV.

“This is the Winter of the world;—and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made

The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise ; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI.

“ O dearest love ! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise :
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold ?
Alas ! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a paradise
Which everlasting spring has made its own,
And while drear Winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII.

“ In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find ;
And though some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it, one comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
Evil with evil, good with good, must wind
In bands of union, which no power may sever :
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never !

XXVIII.

“ The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world ;—and we
Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

“ So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
Whate’er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours ; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are ; let those who come
Behind, for whom our stedfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread our undivided tomb.

XXX.

“ Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live, and burn, and move,
When we shall be no more ;—the world has seen

A type of peace ; and as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI.

“ And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar, most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be ;—what we have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known ;
That record shall remain, when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion ;
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII.

“ The while we two, beloved, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair,
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair :
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin ; no calm sleep
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy ;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep !

XXXIII.

“ These are blind fancies. Reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive ;
There is delusion in the world—and woe,
And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts.—Come near me ! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possest
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human
breast.

XXXIV.

“ Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
O ! willingly, beloved, would these eyes,
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death. I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
Yes, Love, when wisdom fails, makes Cythna wise :
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV.

“ Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even,

All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf.—Lo ! what a change is come
Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Though it change all but thee !” She ceased—night’s
gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky’s sunless
dome.

XXXVI.

Though she had ceased, her countenance, uplifted
To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright ;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
The air they breathed with love, her locks undight ;
“ Fair star of life and love,” I cried, “ my soul’s delight,
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies ?
O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes !”
She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise !

CANTO X.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linked rest ? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect a universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear ?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend ? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share ?

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
Which was not human—the lone Nightingale
Has answered me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath ; from many a dale
The Antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
Like man's own speech ; and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was
broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence ; the blood which flowed
Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet ;—
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce : their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons ; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the South ; so bent
The armies of the leagued kings around
Their files of steel and flame ;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound ;
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their navies' sound.

V.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men : obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings

To the stall, red with blood ; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native home ;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI.

Fertile in prodigies and lies ;—so there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure ;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy : those slaves impure,
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies ;—even at the hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
Of kings and priests, those dark conspirators
He called :—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven
abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come—millions were on their way ;
The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead :—his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood—he smiles. “ Aye, now I feel
I am a King in truth !” he said, and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions ; that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX.

“ But first, go slay the rebels.—Why return
The victor bands ?” he said : “ millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
The scales of victory yet ;—let none survive
But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren here.—
Go forth, and waste and kill !”—“ O king, forgive
My speech,” a soldier answered ;—“ but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near ;

X.

“ For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse,
An Angel bright as day, waving a brand

Which flashed among the stars, passed."—"Dost thou stand
Parleying with me, thou wretch?" the king replied;
"Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band,
Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside;

XI.

"And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth!"
They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
Of their career: the horsemen shook the earth;
The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore;
The infantry, file after file, did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields: the sixth saw gore
Stream through the city; on the seventh, the dew
Of slaughter became stiff; and there was peace anew:

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead!
Peace in the silent streets! save when the cries
Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale their voiceless lips, who seemed to dread
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed;
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song!

XIII.

Day after day the burning Sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land ;—it came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn ;—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died ; the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour past
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First Want, then Plague, came on the beasts ; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts ; gaunt and wasting now,
Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey ;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV.

The fish were poisoned in the streams ; the birds
In the green woods perished ; the insect race
Was withered up ; the scattered flocks and herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase

Died moaning, each upon the other's face
In helpless agony gazing ; round the City
All night, the lean hyænas their sad case
Like starving infants wailed—a woeful ditty !
And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI.

Amid the aërial minarets on high,
The Æthiopian vultures fluttering fell
From their long line of brethren in the sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
These signs the coming mischief did foretell :—
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread
Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings
shed.

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare ;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groaned with the burden of a new despair ;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood ; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food ; the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished ; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown ;
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before
Those winged things sprang forth, were void of shade ;
The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
Were burned ;—so that the meanest food was weighed
With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold ;
They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then : his gold
The miser brought ; the tender maid, grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scorned charms in vain ;
The mother brought her eldest born, controlled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
“ O, for the sheathed steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
With brothers' blood ! O, that the earthquake's grave

Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave !”
Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture, howl and rave,
Or sit, in frenzy’s unimagined mood,
Upon fresh heaps of dead—a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame
Which raged like poison through their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness ! Many saw
Their own lean image everywhere ; it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims ; some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound ; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, “ We tread
On fire ! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread.”

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air ;
And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead, but slumbering quietly,
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the king :—
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and priests ; but Plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier grey,
The house-dog of the throne ; but many a mile
Comes Plague, a winged wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might

Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes ; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
Strange truths ; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI.

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror ;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts : they sought and they could find
No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind !
So, through the desolate streets to the high fane,
The many-tongued and endless armies wind
In sad procession : each among the train
To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

“ O God ! ” they cried, “ we know our secret pride
Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name ;
Secure in human power, we have defied
Thy fearful might ; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence ; with the dust we claim
Kindred. Be merciful, O King of Heaven !
Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII.

“ O King of Glory ! Thou alone hast power !
Who can resist thy will ? who can restrain
Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge,—a blistering rain ?
Greatest and best, be merciful again !
Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works
have weighed ?

XXIX.

“ Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge : recall them now ;
Thy worshippers abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow :
We swear by thee ! And to our oath do thou
Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.”

XXX.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds ;—troubled they past

From the great Temple. Fiercely still and fast
The arrows of the plague among them fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And through the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI.

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watch-words of a single woe,
Arose. Each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl
“ Our God alone is God ! ” and slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when, from beneath a cowl,
A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every
soul.

XXXII.

'Twas an Iberian Priest from whom it came,
A zealous man, who led the legioned west
With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
To quell the unbelievers ; a dire guest
Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest ;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his Idol stood ; for, far and near
Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down ;
Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their
own.

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
Or steel, in Europe : the slow agonies
Of legal torture mocked his keen desire :
So he made truce with those who did despise
The expiation, and the sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
Might crush for him those deadlier enemies ;
For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

"Peace! Peace!" he cried. "When we are dead, the Day
Of Judgment comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe !

But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned
Him whom we all adore,—a subtile foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI.

“Think ye, because we weep, and kneel, and pray,
That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose :
It walks upon the earth to judge his foes,
And what are thou and I, that he should deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII.

“Aye, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes are on us! Those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
Are in their jaws! They hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII.

“ Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep :—
Pile high the pyre of expiation now !
A forest’s spoil of boughs, and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth’s hellish progeny !

XXXIX.

“ Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish !—then pray
That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of Heaven may be appeased.” He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died ;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell ; and as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne

Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
Their King and Judge. Fear killed in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and with an inward fire possest,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods
invest.

XLI.

'Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the dead,
“The Monarch saith, that his great empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head :
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir,—a glorious meed !
But he who both alive can hither bring,
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.”

XLII.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below ;
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square ; for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gad-flies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and
wood.

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation ;
And in the silence of that expectation,
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
It was so deep, save when the devastation
Of the swift pest with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would
fall.

XLIV.

Morn came.—Among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine, still
Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks. In silence, still
The pale survivors stood ; ere noon, the fear
Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
As "Hush ! hark ! Come they yet ? Just Heaven !
thine hour is near !"

XLV.

And Priests rushed through their ranks, some coun-
terfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies. They said their god was waiting

To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need
Of human souls.—Three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed,
Men brought their infidel kindred to appease
God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on
quivering knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey.
The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke
Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there ?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where
Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then,
To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
And laughed and died ; and that unholy men,
Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she !
And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
Came to the fire, and said, " Stop, I am he !
Kill me !" — They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII.

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty ;
And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan
Like love, and died, and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO XI.

I.

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood ;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was
Over her look, the shadow of a mood [thrown
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth.—She stood alone,
Above, the Heavens were spread ;—below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves ;—the wind had blown
Her hair apart, thro' which her eyes and forehead shone.

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains ;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the North :—the day was dying :—
Sudden, the sun shone forth ; its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapours, which, defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made ;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gushed forth like fire, and, as if swayed
By some mute tempest, rolled on *her*. The shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver ;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth.
Rapture, and love, and admiration, wrought
A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy ; which, with the speechless feeling
That led her there, united, and shot forth
From her far eyes, a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there ;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,

Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstacies,
Burst from her looks and gestures ;—and a light
Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise .

From her whole frame,—an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI.

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame ;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole ;—she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head ;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet ;
Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet !

VII.

Never but once to meet on Earth again !
She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
Sank on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
“ I cannot reach thee ! whither dost thou fly ?
My steps are faint.—Come back, thou dearest one—
Return, ah me ! return ! ” The wind passed by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe ! woe ! that moonless midnight.—Want and Pest
Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
Of Hell : each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire ; but still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung :

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest ;
Not life—it was despair to be !—not sleep,
For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
All natural dreams : to wake was not to weep,
But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
Their steps :—they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous
surge.

X.

Each of that multitude alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew ;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost,
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew

Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through ;
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI.

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope ? they had sustained despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
Sleepless a second night ? they are not here
The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead ;
And even in death their lips are writhed with fear.—
The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
Silent Arcturus shines—Ha ! hear'st thou not the tread

XII.

Of rushing feet ? laughter ? the shout, the scream,
Of triumph not to be contained ? See ! hark !
They come, they come ! give way ! Alas, ye deem
Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark
Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark
From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII.

And many, from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies ;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fixed ; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV.

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Concealed his face ; but when he spake, his tone,
Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,
Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror, made them start ;
For as with gentle accents he addressed
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

XV.

“ Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made ;
Yes, desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
And sprang from sleep !—dark Terror has obeyed

Your bidding—Oh that I, whom ye have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
From pain and fear ! but evil casts a shade
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI.

“ Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress ;
Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if he dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves :—consider your own thought,
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII.

“ Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day !
Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
Severe task-mistress ! ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
No evil dreams : all mortal things are cold
And senseless then. If aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII.

“ Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
Oh, could I win your ears to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm ! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel ! that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow ;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom’s fame.

XIX.

“ If thus ’tis well—if not, I come to say
That Laon—”. While the Stranger spoke, among
The Council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain-flowers ; they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung ;
The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent
youth.

XX.

They stabbed them in the back and sneered.—A slave
Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark and secret grave ;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger : “ What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch ?”—Calm, solemn, and severe,

That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI.

“ It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapt in clay :
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon’s friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend !
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

“ There is a People mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshipped ; from a glorious mother’s breast
Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
And draws the milk of Power in Wisdom’s fullest flow.

XXIII.

“ This land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume

Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sun-rise gleams when Earth is wrapt in gloom ;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People ! As the sands shalt thou become ;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade ;
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV.

“ Yes, in the desert then is built a home
 For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
 The monuments of man beneath the dome
 Of a new Heaven ; myriads assemble there,
 Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
 Drive from their wasted homes. The boon I pray
 Is this,—that Cythna shall be convoyed there—
 Nay, start not at the name—America !
 And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

“ With me do what ye will. I am your foe ! ”
 The light of such a joy as makes the stare
 Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
 Shone in a hundred human eyes.—“ Where, where
 Is Laon ? haste ! fly ! drag him swiftly here !
 We grant thy boon.”—“ I put no trust in ye,
 Swear by the Power ye dread.”—“ We swear, we swear ! ”
 The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
 And smiled in gentle pride, and said, “ Lo ! I am he ! ”

CANTO XII.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear ; from his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy ; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes, from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
And filled the startled Earth with echoes : morn did ope

II.

Its pale eyes then ; and lo ! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith it seems to hide ;
And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
A shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I'the midst appears
Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around ;
There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold ; his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild
And calm, and like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear ; but those who saw
Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round : the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V.

And see ! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host. All smile

In expectation, but one child : the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around. Each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn ; towers far and near
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host, as when
An earthquake, trampling on some populous town,
Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second ; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the king, without avail,
Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
Was heard—she trembled like an aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath ?—The signal-gun
Roared—hark, again ! In that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
Bursts on that awful silence. Far away
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of day-light, wandering gone.

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save.
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the reflux of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic, fled in terror's altered mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze,—a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea:—that sudden rout
One checked, who never in his mildest dreams

Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice—but he misdeems
That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self; thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed;

XI.

And others, too, thought he was wise to see,
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine;
In love and beauty—no divinity.—
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—"Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim here."

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
Shrieked the exulting Priest:—"Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
Of her just torments:—at the Judgment Day
Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry, to thee I did betray
An infidel! but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy!—the glory be thine own."

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear,
From many a tremulous eye, but, like soft dew,
Which feed spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there,
Frozen by doubt,—alas ! they could not choose
But weep ; for when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled ;
And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

XV.

She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the snakes. When then had fled
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,

But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love ; the mighty veil
Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.—

XVI.

Yet,—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene.—A blood-red gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
The globed smoke.—I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean ;
And, through its chasms I saw, as in a swoond,
The Tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.

XVII.

And is this death ? The pyre has disappeared,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng ;
The flames grow silent—slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep ;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then ; lo, Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind
Breathed divine odour ; high above, was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance to that mighty fountain ;
And where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which, from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unrepenting strife, it lifts and heaves,
Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves, which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there,

A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams ; from side to side,
While veering to the wind, her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within ; the prow and stern did curl,
Horned on high, like the young moon supine,
When, o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine,
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till, borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet ;—
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spake : “ Aye, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united !
Lo, that is mine own child, who, in the guise
Of madness, came like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods : my heart is now too well requited ! ”

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms ;
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight ;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapt from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph, came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, " I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear—again
We meet ; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV.

" When the consuming flames had wrapt ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went away ;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray

My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
'They wait for thee, beloved!'—then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI.

"It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying ;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers, like night ; beneath whose shade,
Awed by the ending of their own desire,
The armies stood ; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII.

"The frightful silence of that altered mood,
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said—'The flood of time is rolling on,
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.
Have ye done well ? They moulder flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenomed dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

“ ‘These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perished, and their murderers will repent.
Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
Yon smoke has faded from the firmament
Even for this cause, that ye, who must lament
The death of those that made this world so fair,
Cannot recall them now ; but then is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair,
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX.

“ ‘Aye, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn ;
All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
In pain and fire have unbelievers gone ;
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning ;
And to long ages shall this hour be known ;
And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX.

“ ‘For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die ;

Tell to your children this !' then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell ;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

"Then suddenly I stood a winged Thought
Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion, good and great,
The better Genius of this world's estate.
His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead!" These winged words she said,

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
Bade us embark in her divine canoe ;
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
Into the winds' invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow : like gossamer,
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast, while we seemed lingering
there ;

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedar mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds, whose viewless feet
As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven,
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat flew visibly—three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud through morn, and noon, and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver.
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river,
Or when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode ;

Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations
round.

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass ; sometimes beneath the night
Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark green chasms, shades beautiful and white,
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sailed, our minds were full
Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful ;
And in quick smiles whose light would come and go,
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
Number delightful hours—for through the sky
The sphered lamps of day and night, revealing
New changes and new glories, rolled on high,
Sun, Moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair :
On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea,
The stream became, and fast and faster bare
The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steadily and swift, where the waves rolled like moun-
Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour [tains
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled, that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
Wreathed in the silver mist : in joy and pride we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind ; a golden mist did quiver
When its wild surges with the lake were blended :

Our bark hung there, as one line suspended
Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake ;
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed, from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit ; on the sound
Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmed boat approached, and there its haven found.

NOTE ON THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

BY THE EDITOR.

SHELLEY possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say “he fancied,” because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics, and resolving on the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament—the Psalms, the book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode. He was very fond of travelling, and ill health increased this restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter made him pine, especially when our colder spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816 he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the lake of Geneva; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat—sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect of nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet, whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherialised inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others, that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world ; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects ; and they both, with will unvanquished and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817, we were established at Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech ; the wilder portion of the country is rendered

beautiful by exuberant vegetation ; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lace-makers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things,—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousand-fold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censurers, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends ; it best details the impulses of Shelley's mind and his motives ; it was written with entire unre-

serve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

“ *Marlow, Dec. 11, 1817.*

“I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the Poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of ‘the Revolt of Islam;’ but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassured me, in some degree at least. The Poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it any thing approaching to faultless; but when I considered contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was

filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists ; in sympathy and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my chancery paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument ; and to the little scrap about Mandeville, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers, more favourable than that which grew as it were from 'the agony and bloody sweat' of intellectual travail ; surely I must feel that in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it.

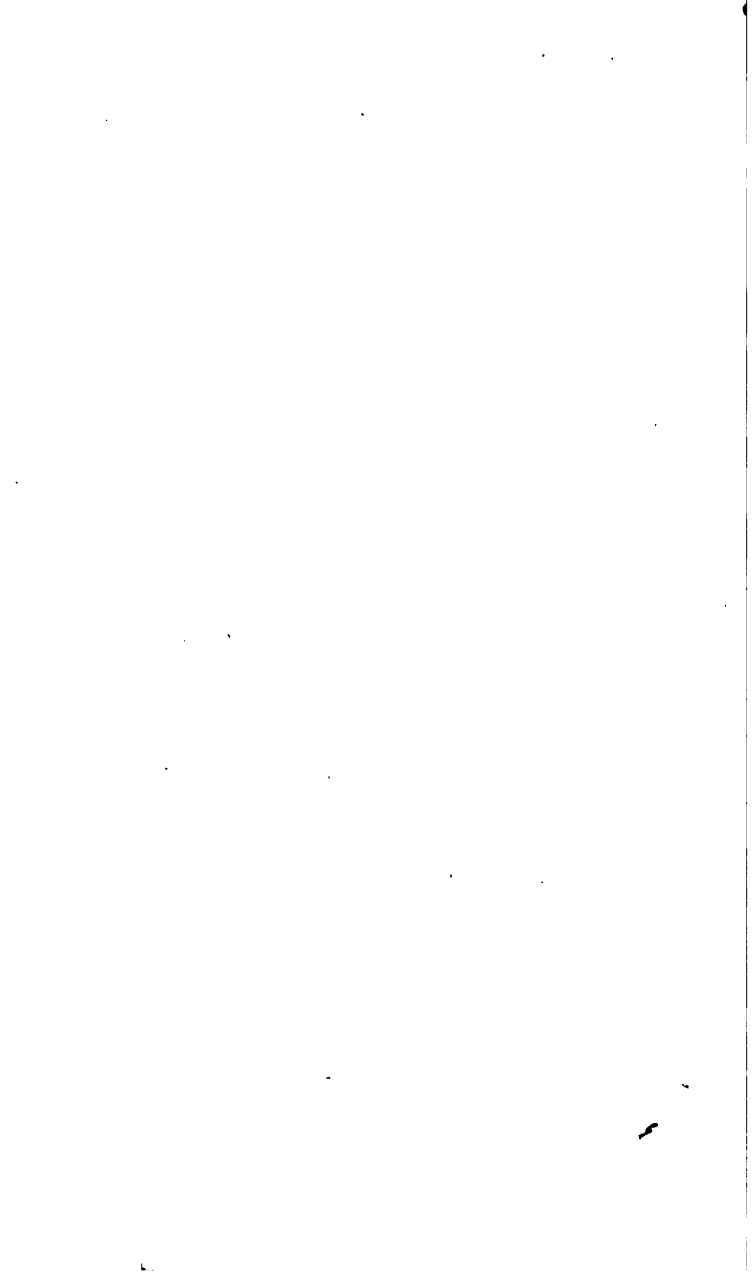
" Yet after all, I cannot but be conscious in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attri-

bute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits."

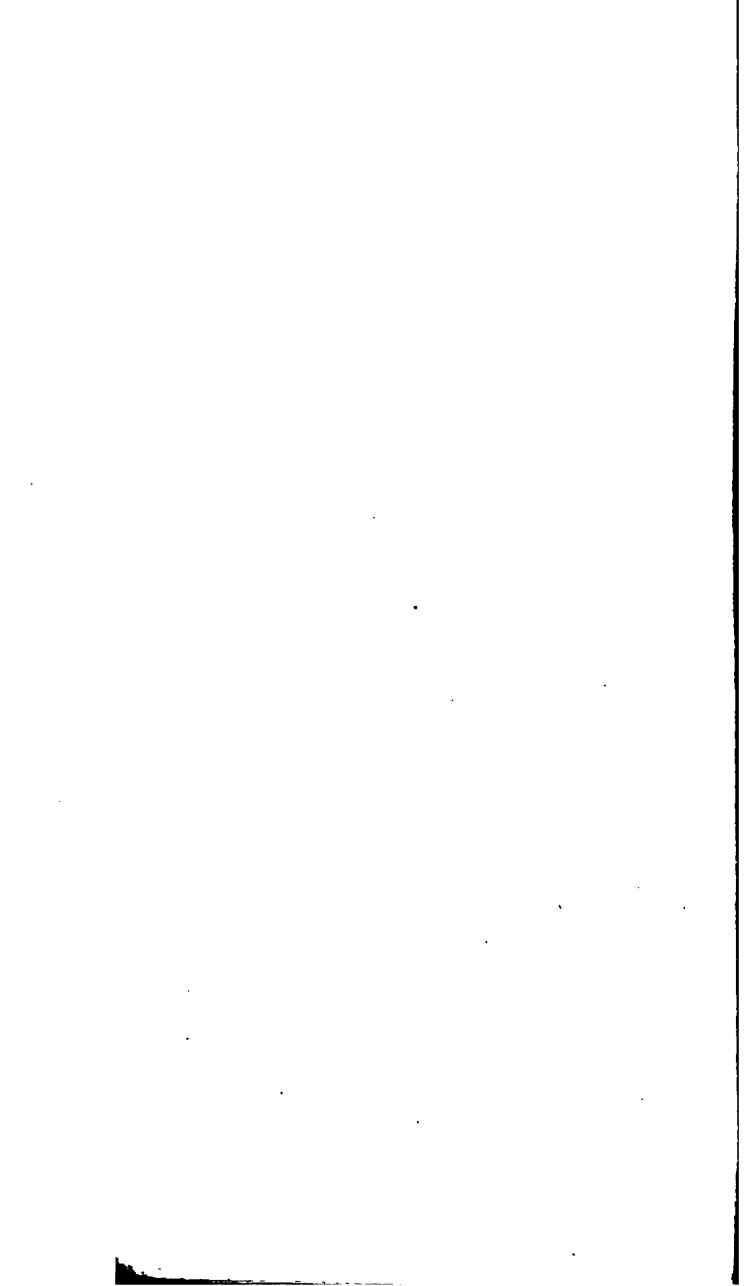


END OF VOL. I.

LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN,
WHITEFRIARS







11/11



